津雲むつみ傑作選 五

Moonlight Flowers

月下美人

Mutsumi Tsukumo
津雲むつみ

9784087852196

1920179006001

ISBN4-08-785219-9

C0179 ¥600E

定価 本体600円＋税

結婚して2年たっても、佐保子にとって
セックスは苦痛だった。夫は外に女を作り、
そして佐保子は高校からの女友達、薫のもとへ走った！
以前から佐保子を愛していた薫。
女同士の愛の行き着く先は!?
表題作の他、夫の浮気に対する妻の激情を描く
長編読み切り「花鬼」を収録。

唐宝もつみ傑作選 Ⅱ
月下美人
Moonlight Flowers

Tsukumo Mutsumi Masterpiece Collection Book 5

Moonlight Flowers

Queen of the Night

Mutsumi Tsukumo

津雲むつみ

THIS IS A KIND OF CACTUS *SELENICEREUS GRANDIFLORUS*. THE JAPANESE NAME "GEKKA BIJIN," LITERALLY MEANS "MOONLIGHT BEAUTY."

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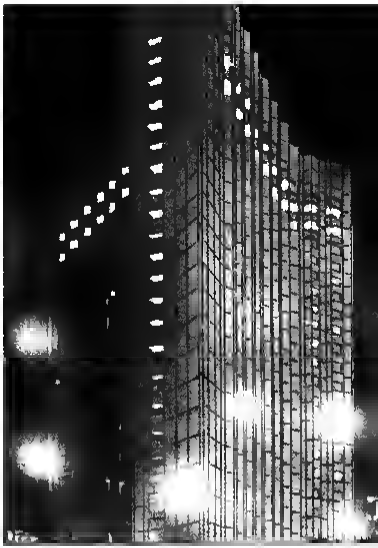
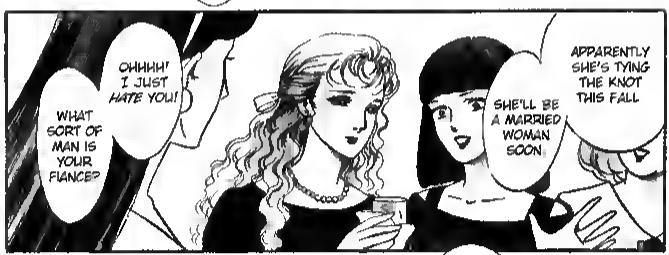
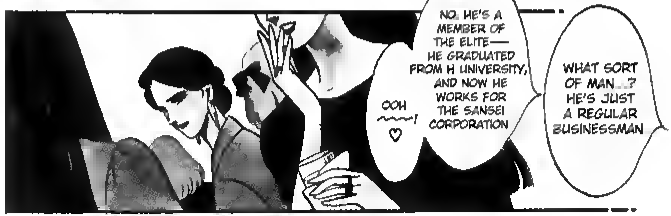
In the blue,
blue moonlight,
her lips softly
brushed mine.
My chest trembled.
It was my first kiss.

Queen of the Night
Moonlight Flowers
Chapter 1

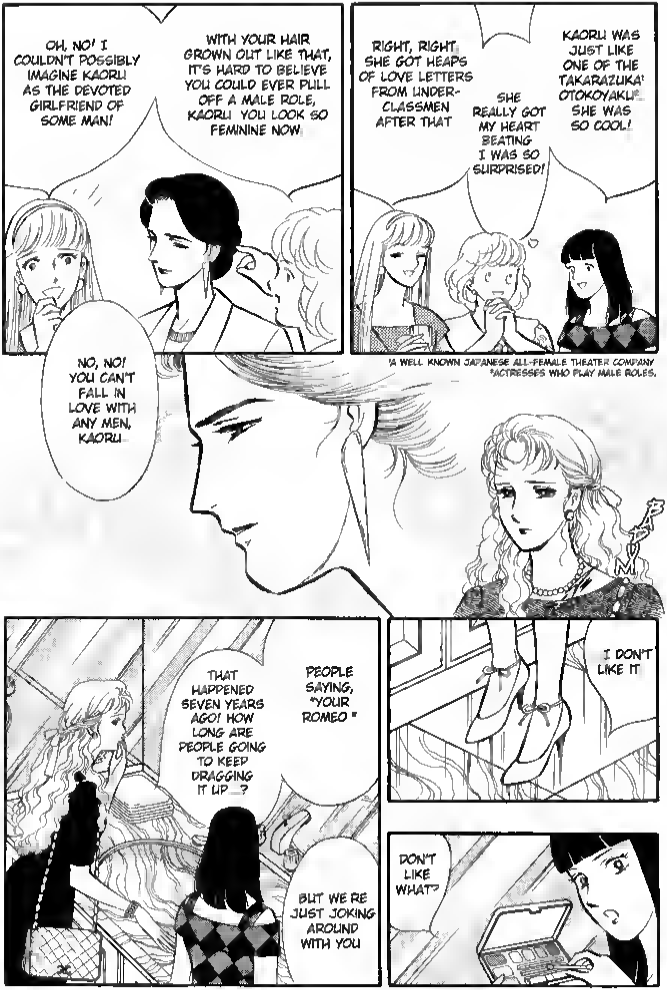
LONG TIME NO SEE!
THE LAST TIME I SAW YOU WAS WHEN WE WERE BOTH GRADUATING FROM COLLEGE SO IT'S BEEN THREE YEARS NOW
OH, SAHOKO!
THAT RING, IS IT

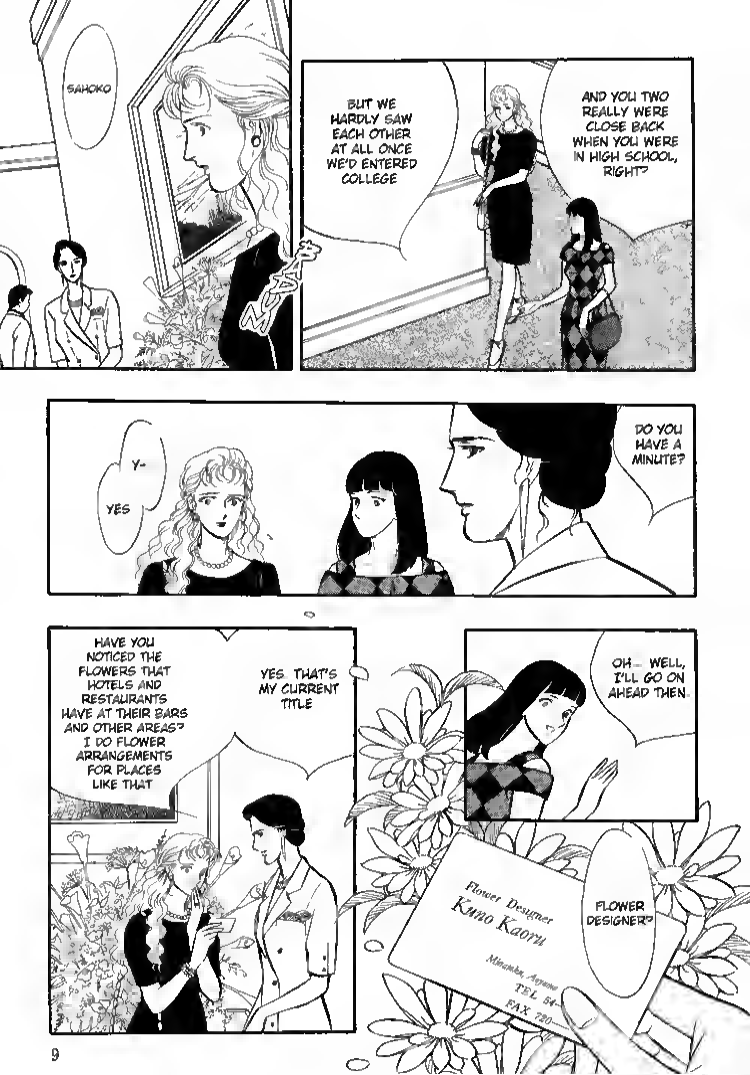



APPARENTLY SHE'S TYING THE KNOT THIS FALL
SHE'LL BE A MARRIED WOMAN SOON.
OHHHH! I JUST *HATE* YOU!
WHAT SORT OF MAN IS YOUR FIANCÉ?

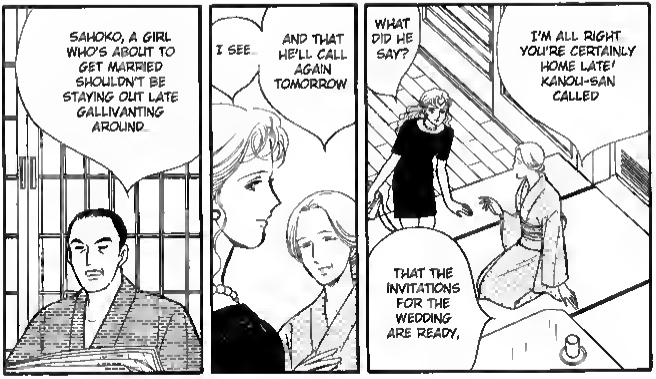

WHAT SORT OF MAN...? HE'S JUST A REGULAR BUSINESSMAN
NO. HE'S A MEMBER OF THE ELITE— HE GRADUATED FROM H UNIVERSITY, AND NOW HE WORKS FOR THE SANSEI CORPORATION
OOH ~~~~! ♡

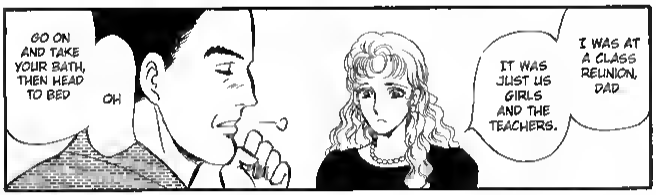
YOUR ROMEO HAS ARRIVED, SAHOKO!
OH!
MY, IT'S KAORU!
KAORU
SAHOKO
IT'S BEEN AWHILE, SAHOKO.
YOU LOOK WELL
KAORU
SAHOKO
I REMEMBER THAT PLAY. IT WAS BACK WHEN WE WERE SENIORS IN HIGH SCHOOL. I THINK IT CAUSED QUITE A FUSS!
KAORU AND SAHOKO PLAYED ROMEO AND JULIET.
RIGHT, RIGHT!
POOR ROMEO. YOUR JULIET TELLS US SHE'S GETTING MARRIED

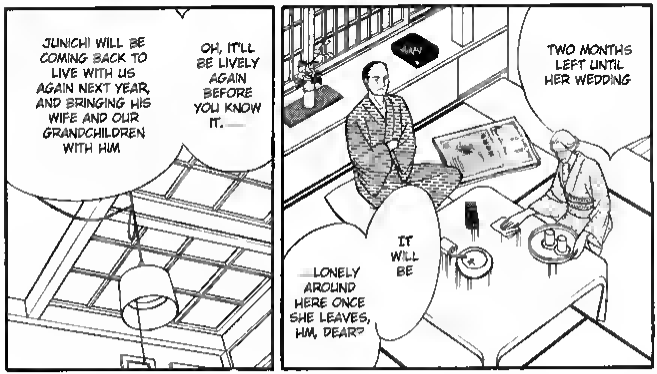

OH, NO! I COULDN'T POSSIBLY IMAGINE KAORU AS THE DEVOTED GIRLFRIEND OF SOME MAN!
WITH YOUR HAIR GROWN OUT LIKE THAT, IT'S HARD TO BELIEVE YOU COULD EVER PULL OFF A MALE ROLE, KAORU. YOU LOOK SO FEMININE NOW.
RIGHT, RIGHT. SHE GOT HEAPS OF LOVE LETTERS FROM UNDER-CLASSMEN AFTER THAT
SHE REALLY GOT MY HEART BEATING. I WAS SO SURPRISED!
KAORU WAS JUST LIKE ONE OF THE TAKARAZUKA* OTOKOYAKU*. SHE WAS SO COOL!
NO, NO! YOU CAN'T FALL IN LOVE WITH ANY MEN, KAORU.
*A WELL KNOWN JAPANESE ALL-FEMALE THEATER COMPANY
*ACTRESSES WHO PLAY MALE ROLES.
I DON'T LIKE IT
PEOPLE SAYING, "YOUR ROMEO"
THAT HAPPENED SEVEN YEARS AGO! HOW LONG ARE PEOPLE GOING TO KEEP DRAGGING IT UP—?
BUT WE'RE JUST JOKING AROUND WITH YOU
DON'T LIKE WHAT?


SAHOKO
BUT WE HARDLY SAW EACH OTHER AT ALL ONCE WE'D ENTERED COLLEGE
AND YOU TWO REALLY WERE CLOSE BACK WHEN YOU WERE IN HIGH SCHOOL, RIGHT?
Y-
YES
DO YOU HAVE A MINUTE?
HAVE YOU NOTICED THE FLOWERS THAT HOTELS AND RESTAURANTS HAVE AT THEIR BARS AND OTHER AREAS? I DO FLOWER ARRANGEMENTS FOR PLACES LIKE THAT
YES THAT'S MY CURRENT TITLE
OH— WELL, I'LL GO ON AHEAD THEN.
Flower Designer
Kano Kaoru
Minatoku, Aoyama
TEL 54-
FAX 720-
FLOWER DESIGNER?

IT'S IMPRESSIVE THAT YOU MADE YOUR DREAM COME TRUE
WAY BACK WHEN YOU TOLD ME THAT YOU WANTED TO END UP WORKING IN A JOB THAT WAS SOMEHOW CONNECTED TO FLOWERS, BECAUSE YOU LOVED THEM SO MUCH
I CREATE WEDDING BOUQUETS AS WELL
I'D BE HAPPY TO MAKE ONE FOR YOU, SAHOKO.
PLEASE FEEL FREE TO CONTACT ME IF YOU'D LIKE
I'M HOME, MOM
SAHOKO?
HOW ARE YOU FEELING?

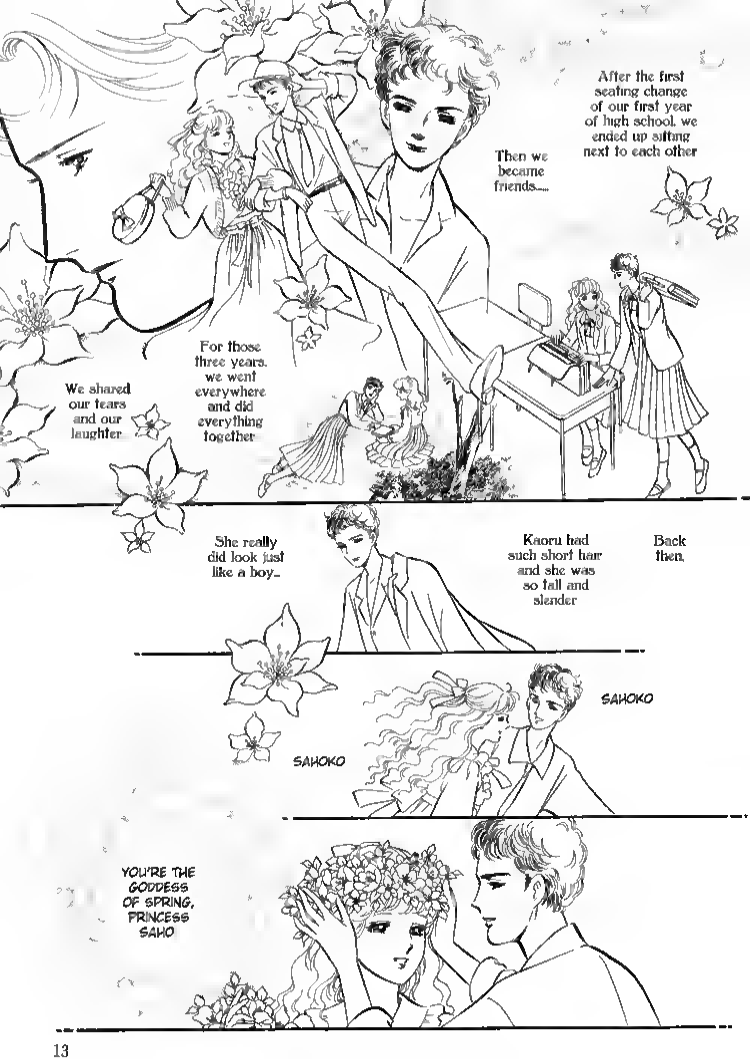

SAHOKO, A GIRL WHO'S ABOUT TO GET MARRIED SHOULDN'T BE STAYING OUT LATE GALLIVANTING AROUND...
I SEE...
AND THAT HE'LL CALL AGAIN TOMORROW
WHAT DID HE SAY?
I'M ALL RIGHT YOU'RE CERTAINLY HOME LATE! KANOU-SAN CALLED
THAT THE INVITATIONS FOR THE WEDDING ARE READY,

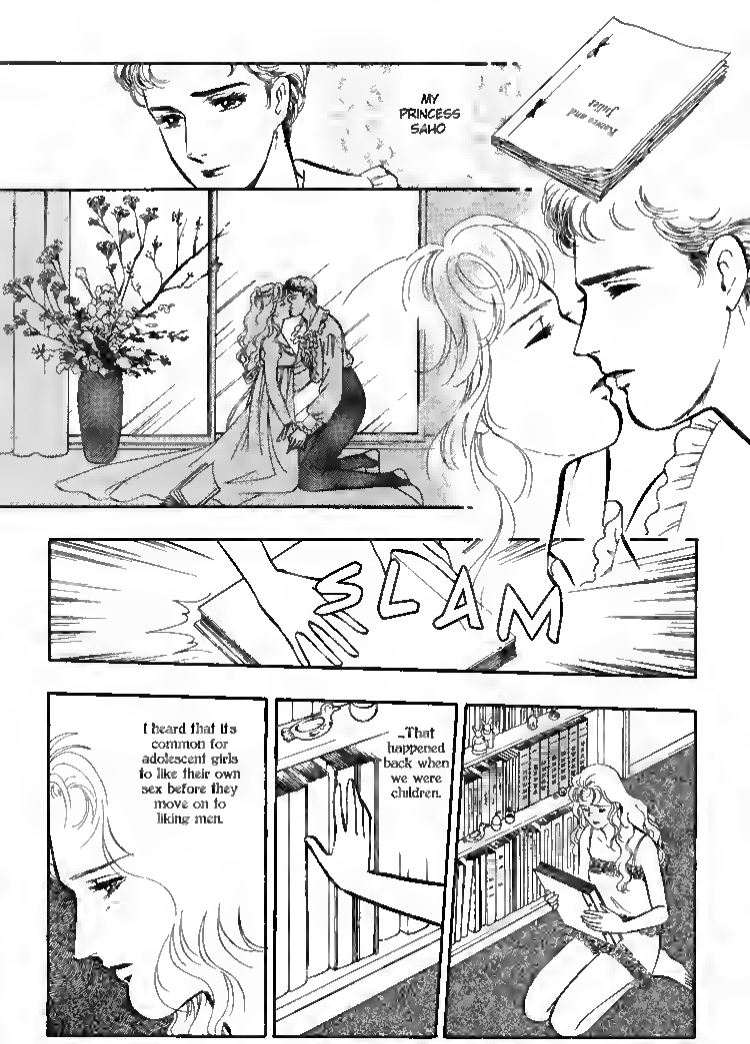

GO ON AND TAKE YOUR BATH, THEN HEAD TO BED
OH
IT WAS JUST US GIRLS AND THE TEACHERS.
I WAS AT A CLASS REUNION, DAD


JUNICHI WILL BE COMING BACK TO LIVE WITH US AGAIN NEXT YEAR, AND BRINGING HIS WIFE AND OUR GRANDCHILDREN WITH HIM
OH, IT'LL BE LIVELY AGAIN BEFORE YOU KNOW IT.
TWO MONTHS LEFT UNTIL HER WEDDING
IT WILL BE
...LONELY AROUND HERE ONCE SHE LEAVES, HM, DEAR?

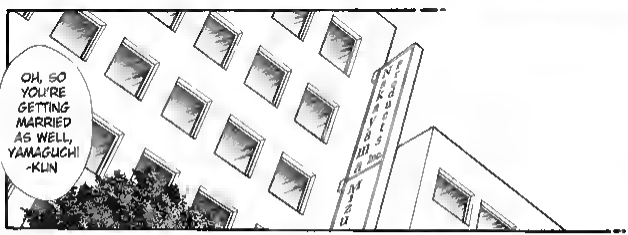
ドキッ

Romeo...


After the first seating change of our first year of high school, we ended up sitting next to each other
Then we became friends....
For those three years, we went everywhere and did everything together.
We shared our tears and our laughter.
Back then,
Kaoru had such short hair and she was so tall and slender.
She really did look just like a boy.
SAHOKO
SAHOKO
YOU'RE THE GODDESS OF SPRING, PRINCESS SAHO

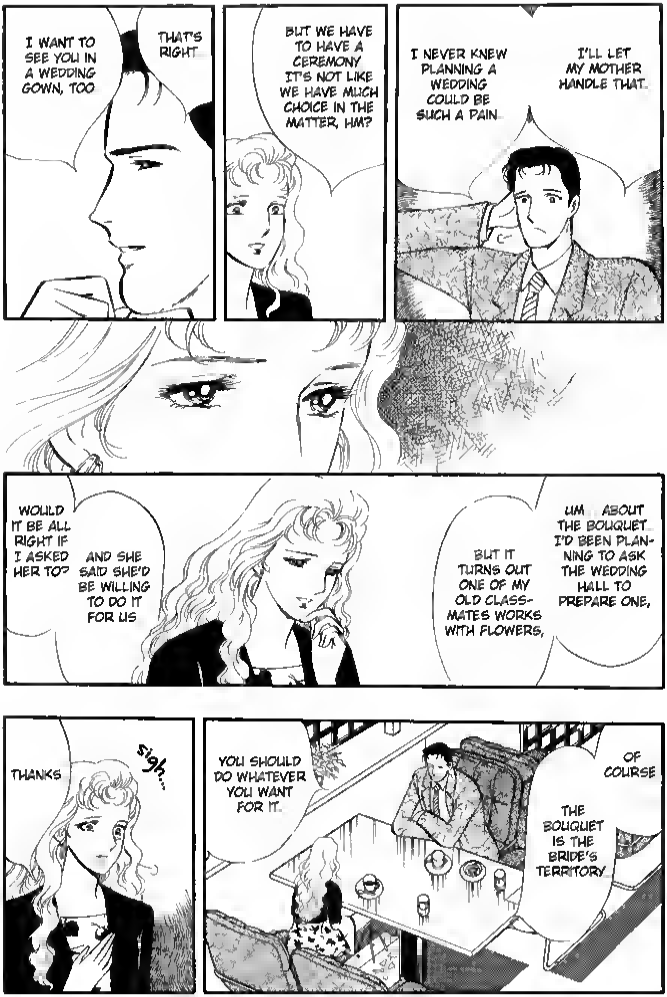

MY PRINCESS SAHO
SLAM
I heard that it's common for adolescent girls to like their own sex before they move on to liking men.
...That happened back when we were children.

...My girlhood dreams are over now
Little dolls, cute stuffed animals, pink ribbons flowers made of lace...
The fairies, princes, and princesses of fairy tales... Time that belonged only to me...
It's time for me to bid farewell to all of those things.
I am 25 years old.
I'm an adult now.
I'm getting married.....


OH, SO YOU'RE GETTING MARRIED AS WELL, YAMAGUCHI -KUN

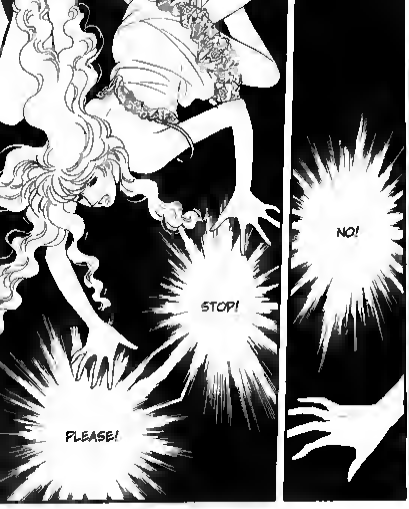
DO YOU HAVE A DATE AGAIN TODAY?
I'M SO JEALOUS.
YOU ONLY HAVE A MONTH LEFT TO WORK.
YES. WE HAVE A LOT OF APPOINTMENTS TO GO TO.
IF YOU'RE PLANNING TO QUIT BECAUSE OF YOUR MARRIAGE, I SUPPOSE I HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO OFFER YOU MY CONGRATULATIONS.
THOUGH THE COMPANY WILL BE DIMINISHED BY YOUR LOSS.
THANK YOU FOR ALL YOU'VE DONE FOR ME.
THREE YEARS AT THE COMPANY, AND NO RUMORS AT ALL ABOUT HER.
NOW SHE'S MARRYING AN ELITE BUSINESSMAN SHE MET THROUGH A MIAI.
LUCKY HER. JUST WHAT I'D EXPECT FROM A GIRL FROM A HIGH-CLASS FAMILY.
A MEETING WITH A POTENTIAL MARRIAGE PARTNER.
HEY, IS IT TRUE SHE'S STILL A VIRGIN?
I DOUBT IT! THERE ARE NO 25-YEAR-OLD VIRGINS THESE DAYS, ARE THERE?
creak

SOME PEOPLE JUST MAKE EXCUSES WHEN THEY'RE LATE
IT'S NICE THAT YOU APOLOGIZE FOR THINGS RIGHT OFF THE BAT, SAHOKO-SAN
"BUT~~~"
"IT'S BE-CAUSE~"
I DID
I'M SORRY. DID YOU WAIT LONG?
BUT IT'S ALL RIGHT. I SUPPOSE I'LL FOR-GIVE YOU
LET'S START ADDRESSING THEM TODAY.
APPARENTLY WE NEED TO SEND THEM OUT AT LEAST 40 DAYS BEFORE THE CEREMONY
YES, THEY'RE PRETTY MUCH SET
HAVE YOU DECIDED ON THE SEATING ARRANGEMENTS YET?
HERE ARE THE INVITA-TIONS


I WANT TO SEE YOU IN A WEDDING GOWN, TOO
THAT'S RIGHT
BUT WE HAVE TO HAVE A CEREMONY IT'S NOT LIKE WE HAVE MUCH CHOICE IN THE MATTER, HM?
I NEVER KNEW PLANNING A WEDDING COULD BE SUCH A PAIN
I'LL LET MY MOTHER HANDLE THAT.
WOULD IT BE ALL RIGHT IF I ASKED HER TO?
AND SHE SAID SHE'D BE WILLING TO DO IT FOR US
BUT IT TURNS OUT ONE OF MY OLD CLASS-MATES WORKS WITH FLOWERS,
UM... ABOUT THE BOUQUET I'D BEEN PLAN-NING TO ASK THE WEDDING HALL TO PREPARE ONE,
THANKS
SIGH...
YOU SHOULD DO WHATEVER YOU WANT FOR IT.
OF COURSE
THE BOUQUET IS THE BRIDE'S TERRITORY

I DON'T WANT YOU TO GO
KANOU-SAN... UM,
I NEED TO GET HOME. IT'S LATE.

LET'S WAIT TO GO ANY FARTHER
UNTIL WE'RE MARRIED
WE'LL HAVE OUR WHOLE LIVES TO SPEND TOGETHER.
I'VE WAITED THIS LONG. I CAN HOLD OUT UNTIL THE CEREMONY
IT'S ONLY TWO MONTHS AWAY
I WON'T LET YOU GO HOME TONIGHT. WELL, THAT'S WHAT I'D LIKE TO SAY.
BUT IT'S ALL RIGHT I'LL TRY AND HOLD ON
LET'S GO
I'LL SEE YOU HOME


NO!
STOP!
PLEASE!

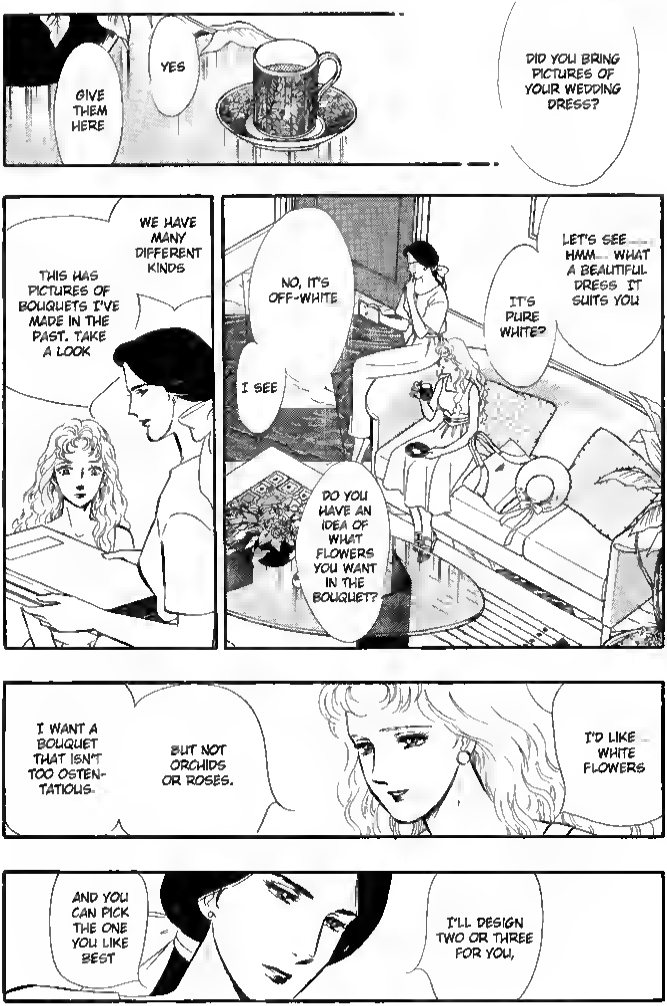
VSSSHHHH

STOP...!

A dream ...
SSSHH!
SSSHH!

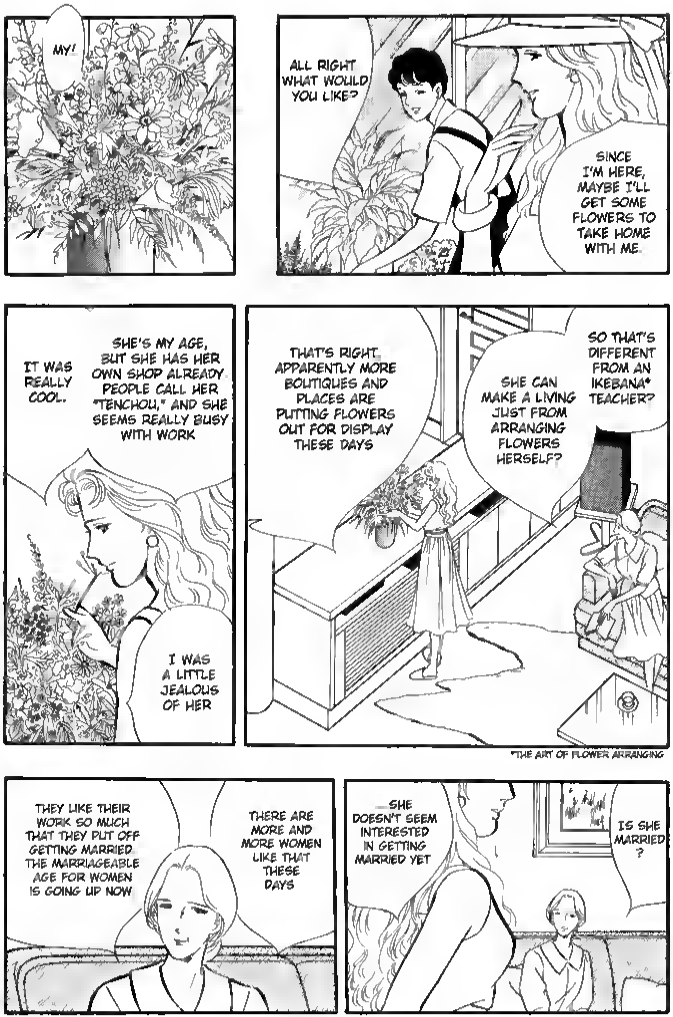
sit up

YES, SHE IS HERE
TEN-CHOU*!
*STORE MANAGER.
SAHOKO!
WELCOME, SAHOKO!
DID YOU HAVE ANY TROUBLE FINDING IT?
NO WHAT A MARVELOUS SHOP IT'S ABSOLUTELY SPLENDID
THIS IS THE OFFICE COME ON IN
I'LL MAKE US SOME COFFEE

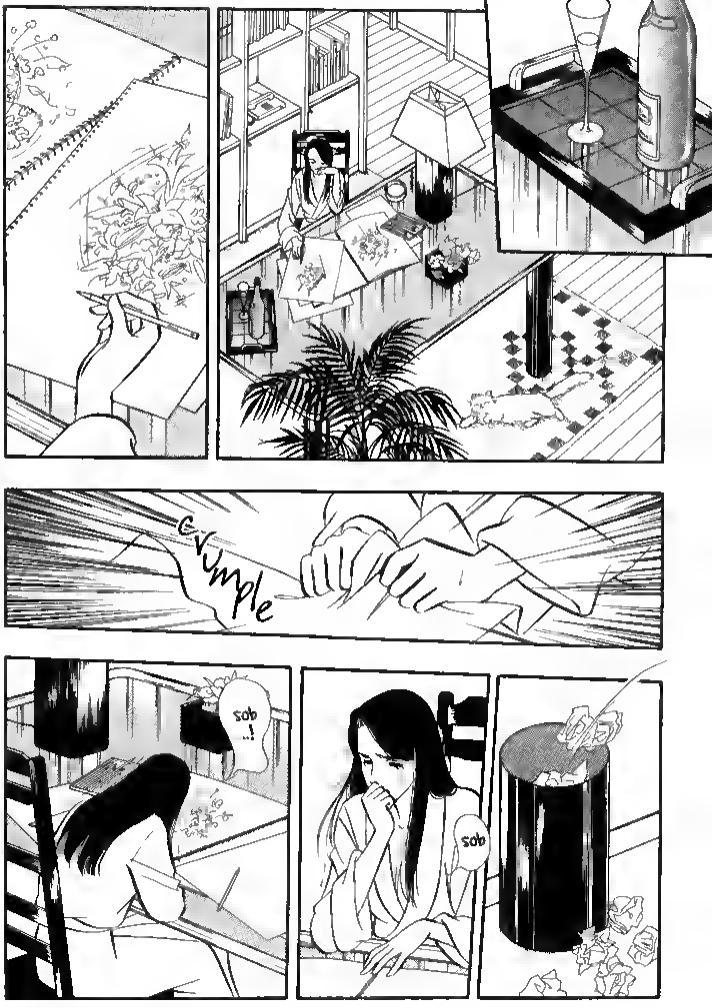

DID YOU BRING PICTURES OF YOUR WEDDING DRESS?
YES
GIVE THEM HERE
LET'S SEE... HMM... WHAT A BEAUTIFUL DRESS IT SUITS YOU
IT'S PURE WHITE?
NO, IT'S OFF-WHITE
I SEE
DO YOU HAVE AN IDEA OF WHAT FLOWERS YOU WANT IN THE BOUQUET?
WE HAVE MANY DIFFERENT KINDS
THIS HAS PICTURES OF BOUQUETS I'VE MADE IN THE PAST. TAKE A LOOK
I'D LIKE WHITE FLOWERS
BUT NOT ORCHIDS OR ROSES.
I WANT A BOUQUET THAT ISN'T TOO OSTENTATIOUS.
I'LL DESIGN TWO OR THREE FOR YOU,
AND YOU CAN PICK THE ONE YOU LIKE BEST

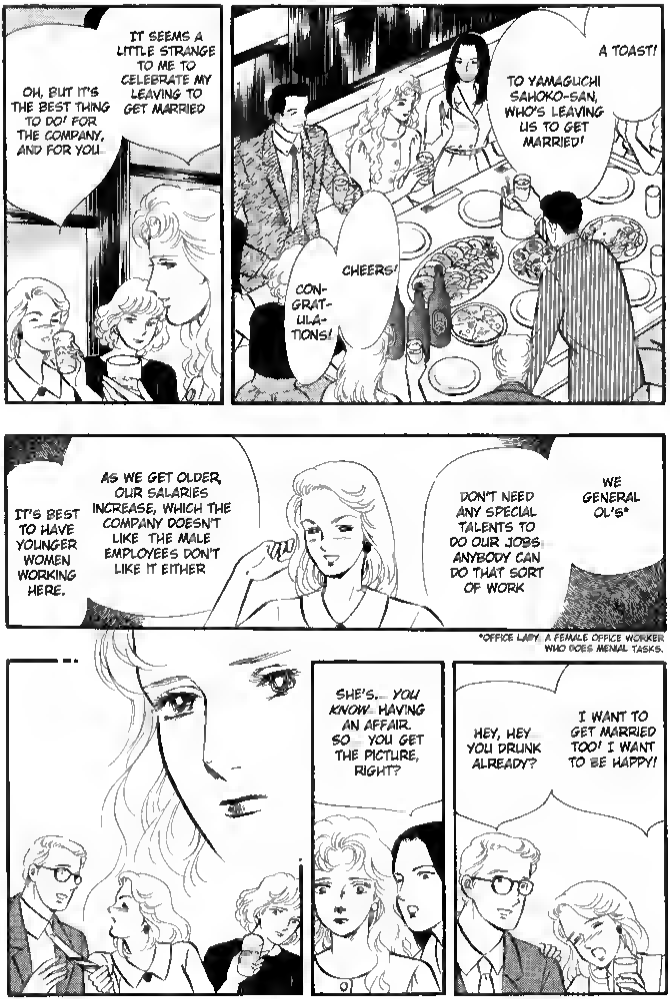
THAT'S WHY YOU'RE GETTING MARRIED?
SO YOU MET HIM THROUGH A MIAI?
MY AUNT'S QUITE A MEDDLER.
YES, THAT'S RIGHT
AND I'M ALREADY 25, YOU KNOW?
MY MOTHER ISN'T DOING VERY WELL, AND I WANTED TO EASE HER MIND...
OH! I'M GETTING MARRIED BECAUSE MY FIANCE IS A GOOD PERSON, OF COURSE
OF COURSE...
I'M NEVER GOING TO GET MARRIED
HUH?
I'M NOT GOING TO GET MARRIED.
DO YOU HAVE A GOOD MAN IN YOUR LIFE, KAORU? I'M SURE YOU'RE POPULAR.

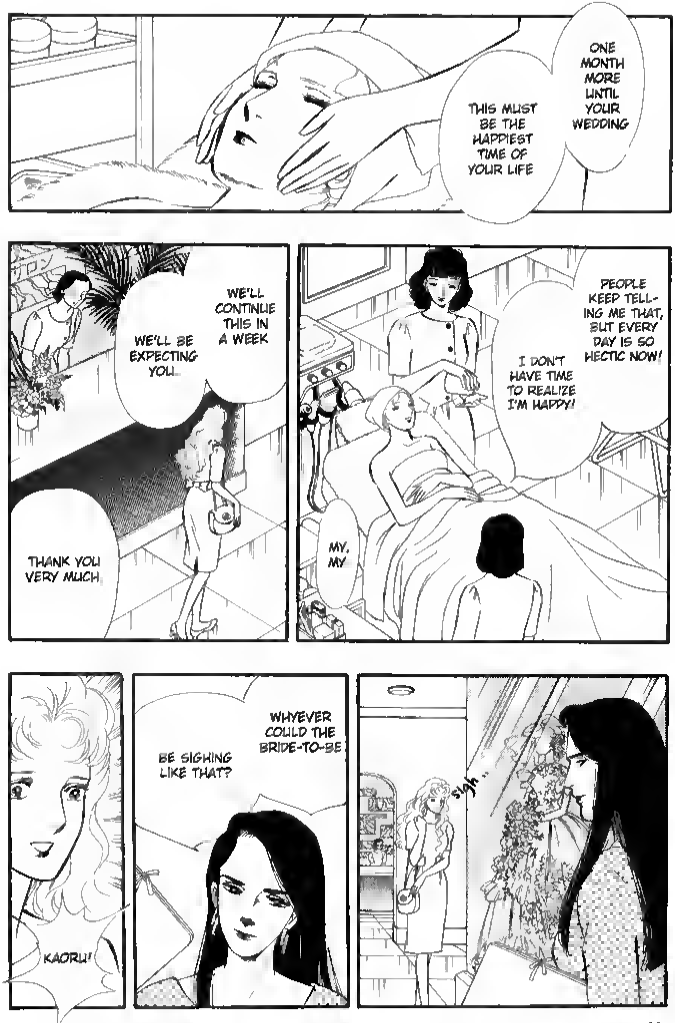
SORRY I WAS IN SUCH A RUSH TODAY.
I'LL SEE YOU LATER, THEN
OH I'LL BE RIGHT THERE
TENCHOU, YOU NEED TO LEAVE SOON
GOODBYE
VRR
THANK YOU PLEASE DO.
I'LL TRY TO HAVE THEM DONE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE
I'LL CONTACT YOU WHEN THE DESIGNS ARE READY
I CAN IMAGINE SHE'S ALWAYS HAD A GOOD SENSE FOR THAT SORT OF THING
THEY'RE PEOPLE'S FAVORITES.
TENCHOU'S FLOWER ARRANGEMENTS ARE REALLY POPULAR ALL OVER TOWN
YES
YOU SEEM TO BE DOING A LOT OF BUSINESS

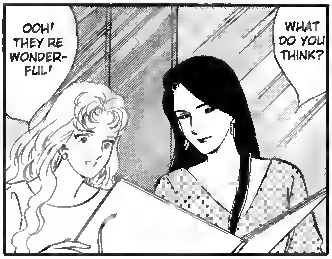

MY!
ALL RIGHT WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE?
SINCE I'M HERE, MAYBE I'LL GET SOME FLOWERS TO TAKE HOME WITH ME.
IT WAS REALLY COOL.
SHE'S MY AGE, BUT SHE HAS HER OWN SHOP ALREADY. PEOPLE CALL HER "TENCHOU," AND SHE SEEMS REALLY BUSY WITH WORK
I WAS A LITTLE JEALOUS OF HER
THAT'S RIGHT. APPARENTLY MORE BOUTIQUES AND PLACES ARE PUTTING FLOWERS OUT FOR DISPLAY THESE DAYS
SHE CAN MAKE A LIVING JUST FROM ARRANGING FLOWERS HERSELF?
SO THAT'S DIFFERENT FROM AN IKEBANA* TEACHER?
*THE ART OF FLOWER ARRANGING
THEY LIKE THEIR WORK SO MUCH THAT THEY PUT OFF GETTING MARRIED. THE MARRIAGEABLE AGE FOR WOMEN IS GOING UP NOW.
THERE ARE MORE AND MORE WOMEN LIKE THAT THESE DAYS
—SHE DOESN'T SEEM INTERESTED IN GETTING MARRIED YET
IS SHE MARRIED?

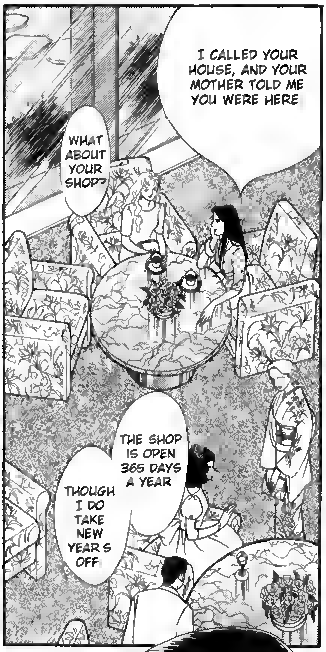
THEY MAY SAY THIS AND THAT, BUT WOMEN ARE ULTIMATELY DEPENDENT ON MEN
THEY EACH SHOULD MARRY A GOOD, DEPENDABLE MAN.
AND BEAR AND RAISE HIS CHILDREN
IT MAY BE A MUNDANE LIFE BUT IT'S THE BEST ONE FOR THEM.
YES
Kimi Kenji-sama
Congratulations

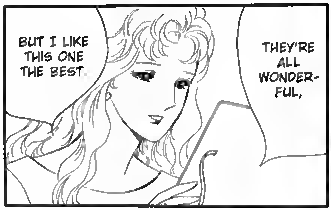

crumple
sob
sob

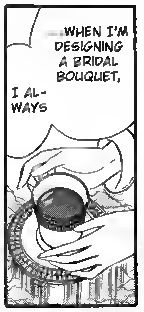

IT SEEMS A LITTLE STRANGE TO ME TO CELEBRATE MY LEAVING TO GET MARRIED
OH, BUT IT'S THE BEST THING TO DO! FOR THE COMPANY, AND FOR YOU.
A TOAST!
TO YAMAGUCHI SAHOKO-SAN, WHO'S LEAVING US TO GET MARRIED!
CHEERS!
CON-GRAT-ULA-TIONS!
IT'S BEST TO HAVE YOUNGER WOMEN WORKING HERE.
AS WE GET OLDER, OUR SALARIES INCREASE, WHICH THE COMPANY DOESN'T LIKE. THE MALE EMPLOYEES DON'T LIKE IT EITHER
DON'T NEED ANY SPECIAL TALENTS TO DO OUR JOBS. ANYBODY CAN DO THAT SORT OF WORK
WE GENERAL OL'S*
*OFFICE LADY. A FEMALE OFFICE WORKER WHO DOES MENIAL TASKS.
SHE'S... YOU KNOW. HAVING AN AFFAIR. SO YOU GET THE PICTURE, RIGHT?
HEY, HEY. YOU DRUNK ALREADY?
I WANT TO GET MARRIED TOO! I WANT TO BE HAPPY!

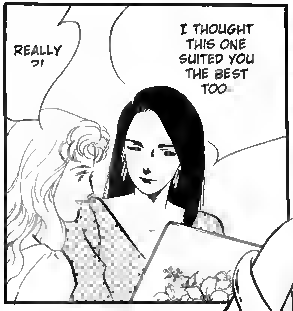

ONE MONTH MORE UNTIL YOUR WEDDING
THIS MUST BE THE HAPPIEST TIME OF YOUR LIFE
WE'LL CONTINUE THIS IN A WEEK
WE'LL BE EXPECTING YOU..
THANK YOU VERY MUCH
PEOPLE KEEP TELLING ME THAT, BUT EVERY DAY IS SO HECTIC NOW!
I DON'T HAVE TIME TO REALIZE I'M HAPPY!
MY, MY
KAORU!
WHYEVER COULD THE BRIDE-TO-BE BE SIGHING LIKE THAT?
sigh..


OOH! THEY'RE WONDER-FUL!
WHAT DO YOU THINK?


I CALLED YOUR HOUSE, AND YOUR MOTHER TOLD ME YOU WERE HERE
WHAT ABOUT YOUR SHOP?
THE SHOP IS OPEN 365 DAYS A YEAR
THOUGH I DO TAKE NEW YEAR'S OFF.

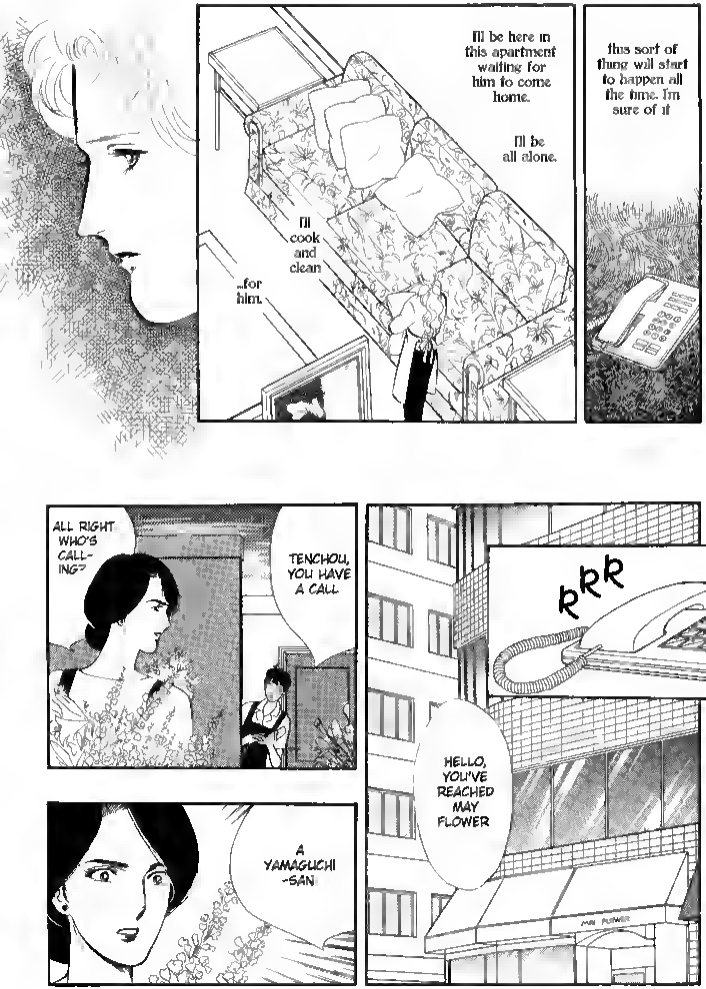

BUT I LIKE THIS ONE THE BEST.
THEY'RE ALL WONDER-FUL,


I AL-WAYS
WHEN I'M DESIGNING A BRIDAL BOUQUET,

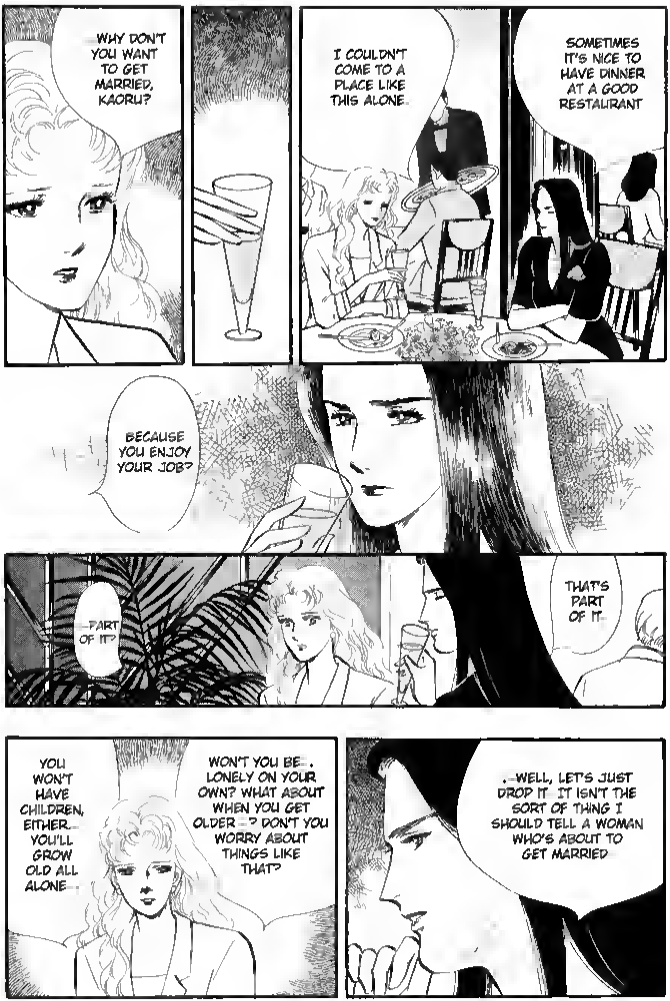

REALLY ?!
I THOUGHT THIS ONE SUITED YOU THE BEST TOO.

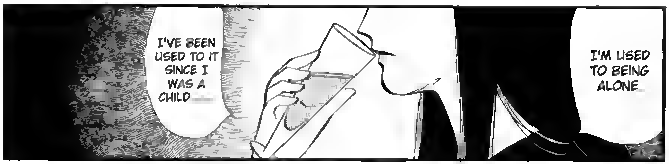
I WANT YOU TO FIND HAPPINESS, SAHOKO.
I'LL PUT MY HEART INTO DESIGNING YOUR BOUQUET AND HEADPIECE
PRAY FOR THE BRIDE'S HAPPINESS AS I'M CREATING THE DESIGN
ding dong
COMING!
I HAVE A PACKAGE FOR YOU.
THANK YOU FOR YOUR HARD WORK

THE ROOM IS PACKED WITH BOXES...
TAKASHI-SAN WHERE ARE YOU RIGHT NOW?
HUH?
Sorry!
YAMAGUCH! SPEA- NO, I MEAN...
Don't you mean "Kanou speaking"?
R R R R
AHN! THE PHONE!
I'M COMING, I'M COMI-LING!
BUT I JUST COULDN'T GET AWAY...
WE FINI-SHED OUR GOLF GAME
I'M WITH MY DEPART-MENT HEAD AND THE OTHERS
...Once were married.
NO, NOTHING LIKE THAT
Heh! Heh! Heh.
WHAT, IS YOUR FIANCEE SULKING SINCE YOU WOULDN'T GO OUT WITH HER?
THE BEGINNING OF THE MARRIAGE IS CRUCIAL. YOU SHOULDN'T SPOIL HER TOO MUCH.

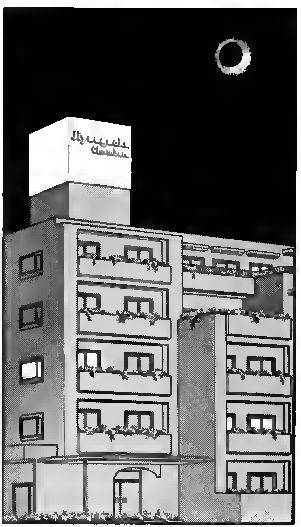

I'll be here in this apartment waiting for him to come home.
I'll be all alone.
I'll cook and clean
...for him.
...this sort of thing will start to happen all the time. I'm sure of it
ALL RIGHT WHO'S CALL-ING?
TENCHOU, YOU HAVE A CALL
A YAMAGUCHI -SAN
RRR
HELLO, YOU'VE REACHED MAY FLOWER

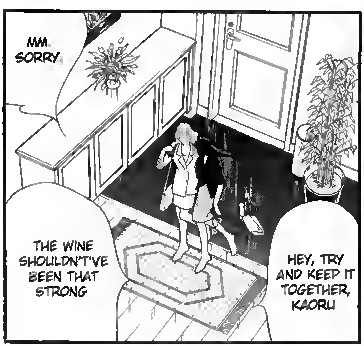
MAY FLOWER
SEE YOU LATER! PLEASE TAKE CARE OF THE SHOP WHILE I'M GONE
LEAVE THE CAR AT MY APARTMENT, OKAY?
YES, I WILL
GOOD-BYE!
dash
HELLO, SAHOKO?!
WHAT IS IT?
TENCHOU REALLY FLEW OFF, LIKE SHE WAS GOING TO SEE HER LOVER OR SOMETHING.
SHE LOOKED SO HAPPY
NO WAY! IT WAS A WOMAN WHO CALLED
I'M SORRY I CALLED AND ASKED YOU TO MEET WITH ME I KNOW YOU'RE BUSY
NO, I WAS HAPPY YOU DID
TAKADA-DOU
Look at the face


WHY DON'T YOU WANT TO GET MARRIED, KAORU?
I COULDN'T COME TO A PLACE LIKE THIS ALONE.
SOMETIMES IT'S NICE TO HAVE DINNER AT A GOOD RESTAURANT
BECAUSE YOU ENJOY YOUR JOB?
...PART OF IT?
THAT'S PART OF IT.
YOU WON'T HAVE CHILDREN, EITHER... YOU'LL GROW OLD ALL ALONE...
WON'T YOU BE... LONELY ON YOUR OWN? WHAT ABOUT WHEN YOU GET OLDER...? DON'T YOU WORRY ABOUT THINGS LIKE THAT?
...WELL, LET'S JUST DROP IT. IT ISN'T THE SORT OF THING I SHOULD TELL A WOMAN WHO'S ABOUT TO GET MARRIED.


I'VE BEEN USED TO IT SINCE I WAS A CHILD...
I'M USED TO BEING ALONE...

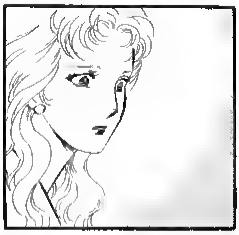
click

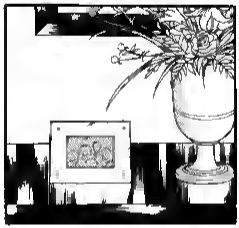



MM. SORRY.
THE WINE SHOULDN'T'VE BEEN THAT STRONG
HEY, TRY AND KEEP IT TOGETHER, KAORU

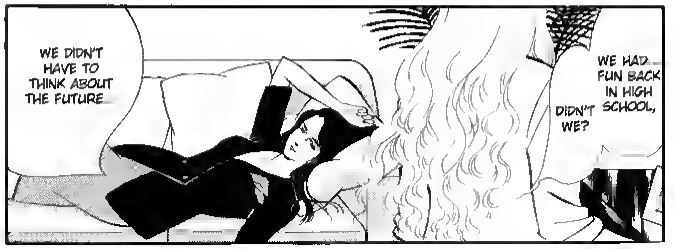
flop

KAORU!
I'M HOME, ELLY!





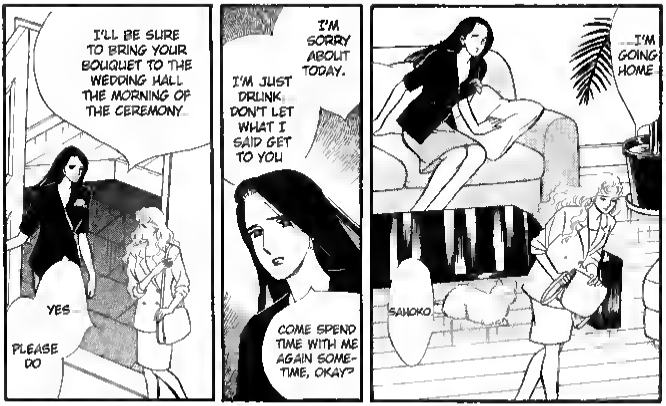
THAT'S NO GOOD
HERE, TAKE YOUR CLOTHES OFF
AND GO LIE DOWN IN BED

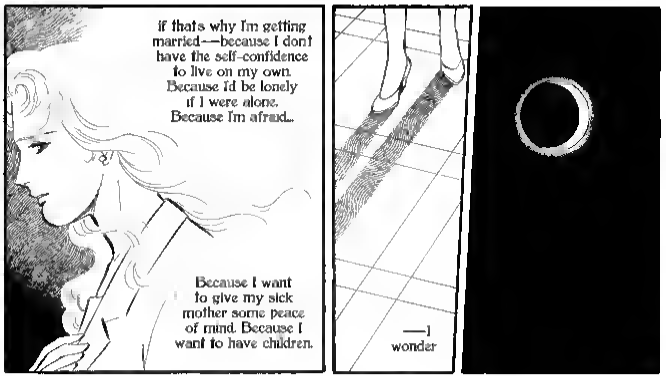

WE DIDN'T HAVE TO THINK ABOUT THE FUTURE...
WE HAD... FUN BACK IN HIGH SCHOOL, DIDN'T WE?

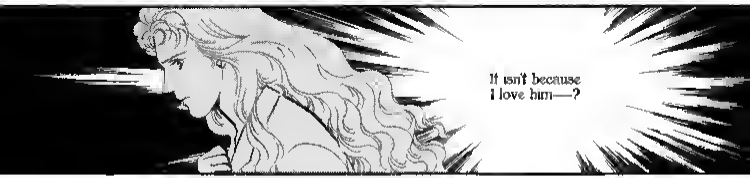
IT HAPPENED WHEN I WAS EIGHT.
BECAUSE MY FATHER TOOK A MISTRESS...
KILLED HERSELF...?
IT'S BECAUSE I LOOK LIKE MY MOTHER. SHE KILLED HERSELF, YOU KNOW.
MY FATHER HASN'T LIKED ME FOR A LONG TIME NOW.
SINCE HIGH SCHOOL, RIGHT, KAORU?
YOU'VE BEEN LIVING ALONE IN THIS APARTMENT
MY FATHER MARRIED HIS MISTRESS AFTER MY MOTHER DIED.
THEY HAVE THREE CHILDREN TOGETHER.
THEY'RE A HAPPY, PEACEFUL FAMILY.
AT LEAST WHEN I'M NOT AROUND
MY FATHER OWES ME.
SO HE GIVES ME ALL THE MONEY I WANT
HE PAID FOR THIS APARTMENT, AND MY SHOP...
But I never knew... that her mother committed suicide...
...I'd heard she lived alone because she didn't get along with her step-mother.

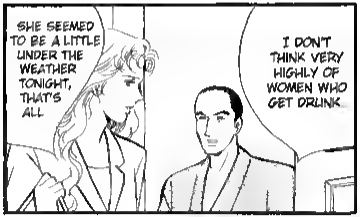
I DON'T WANT TO BECOME SOME MAN'S SLAVE
SLAVE .?
YES
I DON'T WANT TO BECOME THE SORT OF WOMAN WHO'S FINANCIALLY, SPIRITUALLY, AND PHYSICALLY DEPENDENT ON A MAN.
THAT SORT OF WOMAN ISN'T ALLOWED TO MAKE ANY DECISIONS FOR HERSELF,
AND SHE HAS NOTHING OF HER OWN
SHE'S A MAN'S SLAVE SHE DOES EXACTLY AS HE ASKS— BOTH PHYSICALLY AND EMOTIONALLY
THAT'S
SORRY

Princess Saho.
YOU'RE THE PERSON I MOST WANT TO FIND HAPPINESS, PRINCESS SAHO
THAT I WISH FOR A BRIDE'S HAPPINESS AS I'M MAKING HER BOUQUET... IT'S THE TRUTH...
I TOLD YOU BEFORE, DIDN'T I?
DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT. THAT'S JUST MY PERSONAL OPINION
Her secret nickname for me back in high school...
She was the only one who called me that
MY PRINCESS SAHO
I'M NOT STRONG ENOUGH TO LIVE ALONE THE WAY YOU DO
SO...
I'M... I'M JUST A REGULAR WOMAN... I DON'T HAVE ANY SPECIAL TALENTS...

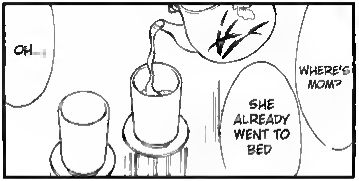

I'LL BE SURE TO BRING YOUR BOUQUET TO THE WEDDING HALL THE MORNING OF THE CEREMONY.
YES
PLEASE DO
I'M SORRY ABOUT TODAY.
I'M JUST DRUNK. DON'T LET WHAT I SAID GET TO YOU
COME SPEND TIME WITH ME AGAIN SOMETIME, OKAY?
I'M GOING HOME
SAHOKO


if that's why I'm getting married—because I don't have the self-confidence to live on my own. Because I'd be lonely if I were alone. Because I'm afraid...
Because I want to give my sick mother some peace of mind. Because I want to have children.
—I wonder

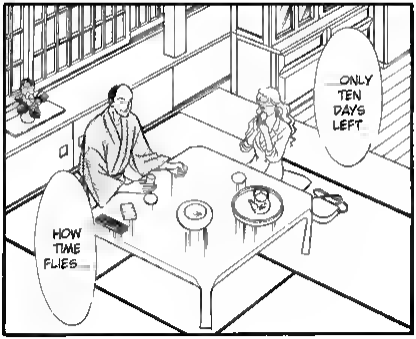

It isn't because I love him—?


SHE SEEMED TO BE A LITTLE UNDER THE WEATHER TONIGHT, THAT'S ALL
I DON'T THINK VERY HIGHLY OF WOMEN WHO GET DRUNK

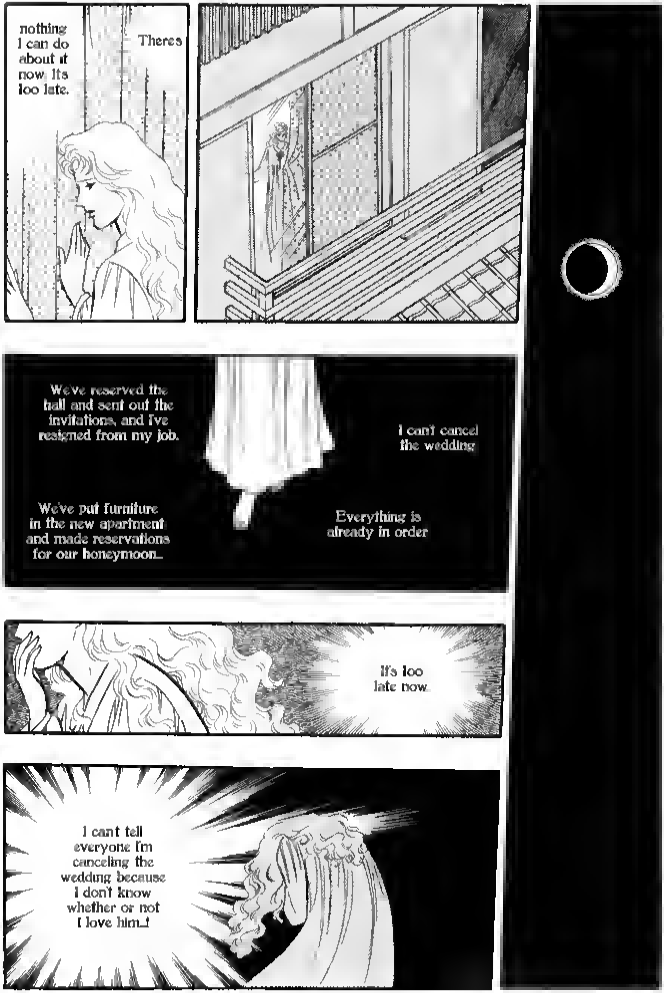
IT'S LATE, SAHOKO
I'M SORRY
KAORU GOT DRUNK—SO I SAW HER HOME


OH—
WHERE'S MOM?
SHE ALREADY WENT TO BED

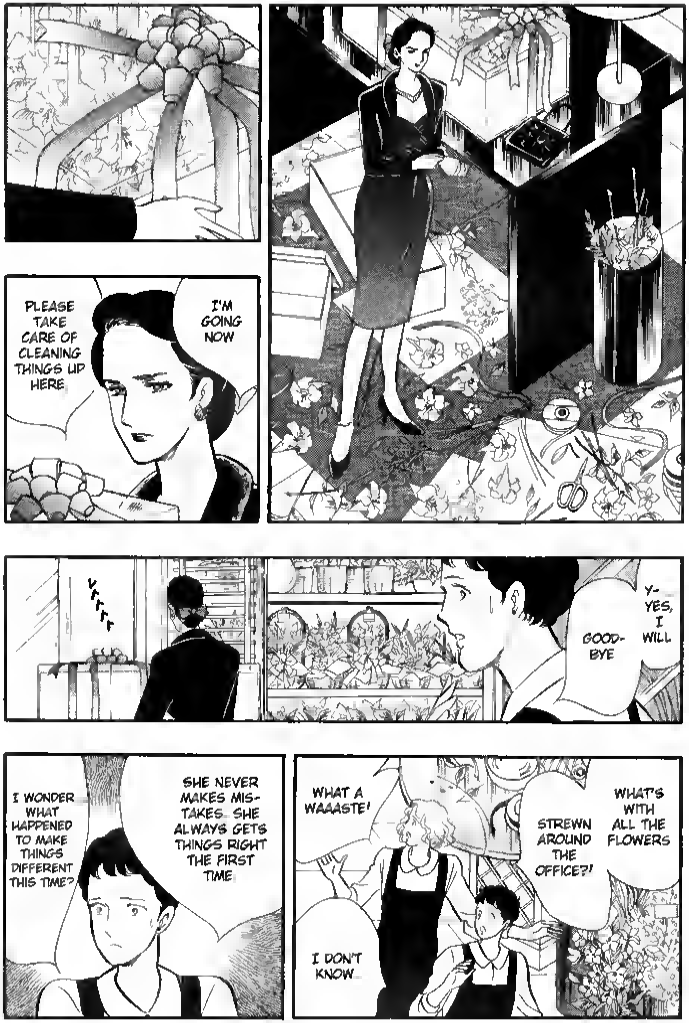
WHEN YOU GET MARRIED, IT... IT WON'T BE LIKE LIVING HERE AT HOME
OH, SAHOKO
cough


ONLY TEN DAYS LEFT
HOW TIME FLIES—

I KNOW, DAD
WELL... JUST TRY AND PUT UP WITH THE THINGS YOU NEED TO.
YOU'LL HAVE DIFFERENT OPINIONS ON A LOT OF THINGS, AND THINGS WON'T ALWAYS GO THE WAY YOU'D LIKE THEM TO.
YOU AND YOUR HUSBAND WILL BE LIVING TOGETHER FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE YOU GREW UP IN DIFFERENT FAMILIES,
YES.
SLOWLY EVOLVE INTO A MARRIED COUPLE AS THE YEARS GO BY...
A MAN AND HIS WIFE
I HAVE TO BE UP EARLY
SO I SHOULD GO TO BED SOON RIGHT?
FOR WORK TOMOR-ROW,
PUTT PUTT
I KNOW, ELLY.

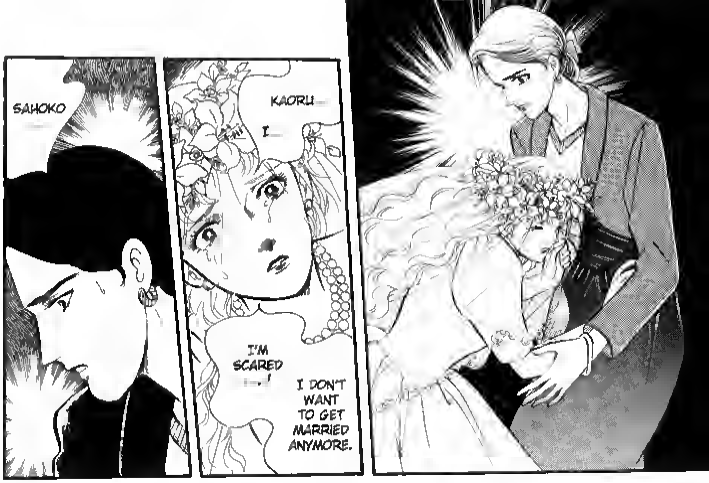

nothing I can do about it now. It's too late.
There's
We've reserved the hall and sent out the invitations, and I've resigned from my job.
I can't cancel the wedding
We've put furniture in the new apartment and made reservations for our honeymoon...
Everything is already in order
It's too late now.
I can't tell everyone I'm canceling the wedding because I don't know whether or not I love him...!

THANK YOU
ALMOST ELEVEN...
WHAT TIME IS IT?
TEN-CHOU
!
THE CEREMONY STARTS AT ONE, DOESN'T IT?
TEN-CHOU?
IS IT READY?
knock knock
YOU NEED TO GET READY TO LEAVE SOON

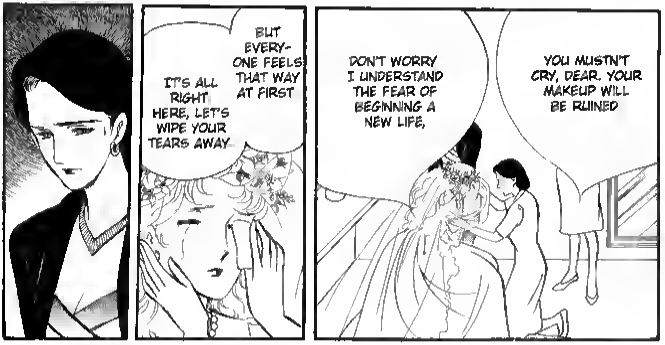

I'M GOING NOW
PLEASE TAKE CARE OF CLEANING THINGS UP HERE.
Y-YES, I WILL
GOOD-BYE
WHAT'S WITH ALL THE FLOWERS STREWN AROUND THE OFFICE?!
WHAT A WAAAASTE!
I DON'T KNOW.
SHE NEVER MAKES MISTAKES. SHE ALWAYS GETS THINGS RIGHT THE FIRST TIME.
I WONDER WHAT HAPPENED TO MAKE THINGS DIFFERENT THIS TIME?

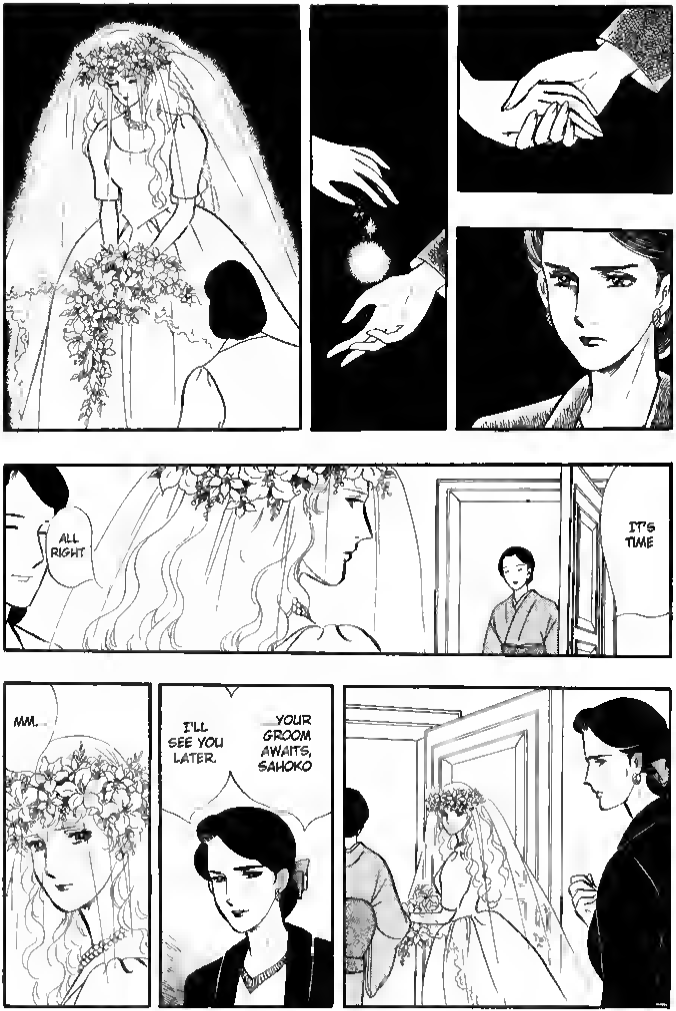
COME IN
knock
knock

PLEASE BRING THE HEADPIECE OVER HERE.
I'D LIKE TO PUT IT ON HER MYSELF, IF YOU WOULDN'T MIND.
DON'T WORRY, I'M USED TO DOING IT.
OH, YOU BROUGHT THE BOUQUET.
KAORU
SAHOKO... YOU LOOK BEAUTIFUL.
WHAT'S WRONG?
SAHOKO ?!


SAHOKO
KAORU
I...
I'M SCARED...!
I DON'T WANT TO GET MARRIED ANYMORE.

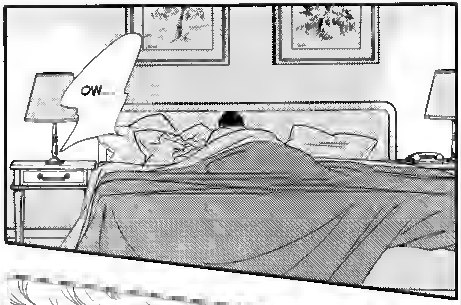
OH, DEAR.
THIS IS A PROB-LEM.


IT'S ALL RIGHT HERE, LET'S WIPE YOUR TEARS AWAY
BUT EVERY-ONE FEELS THAT WAY AT FIRST
DON'T WORRY I UNDERSTAND THE FEAR OF BEGINNING A NEW LIFE.
YOU MUSTN'T CRY, DEAR. YOUR MAKEUP WILL BE RUINED

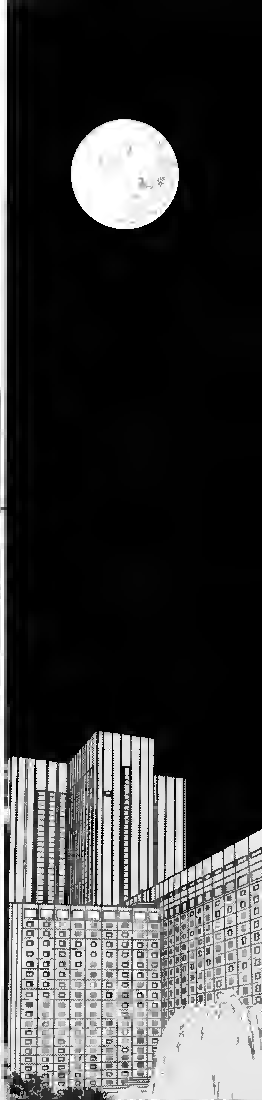

ALL RIGHT
IT'S TIME
MM...
I'LL SEE YOU LATER.
YOUR GROOM AWAITS, SAHOKO

Wait!
THUD
Wait!
Dont go....!
Princess Saho....!!

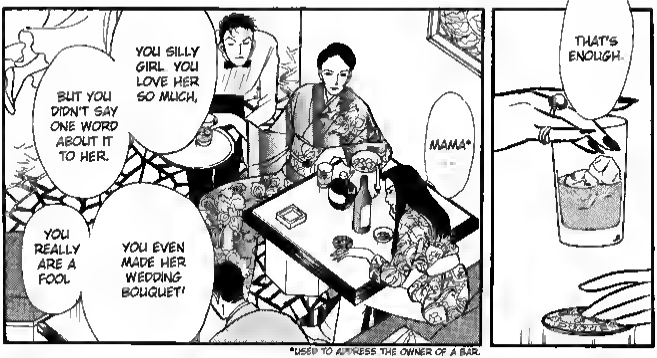
WELL, THE BRIDEGROOM, KANOU TAKASHI-KUN, DID EXCELLENTLY AT H UNIVERSITY
AND WENT ON TO WORK FOR THE SANSEI CORPORATION
AND THE BRIDE, YAMAGUCHI SAHOKO-SAN
SAHOKO LOOKS SO PRETTY.
HER HUSBAND IS PRETTY HANDSOME, TOO
THEY'RE THE PERFECT PAIR.
I HEARD THEY'RE GOING TO AUSTRALIA FOR THEIR HONEY-MOON
LUCKY THEM!


OW...

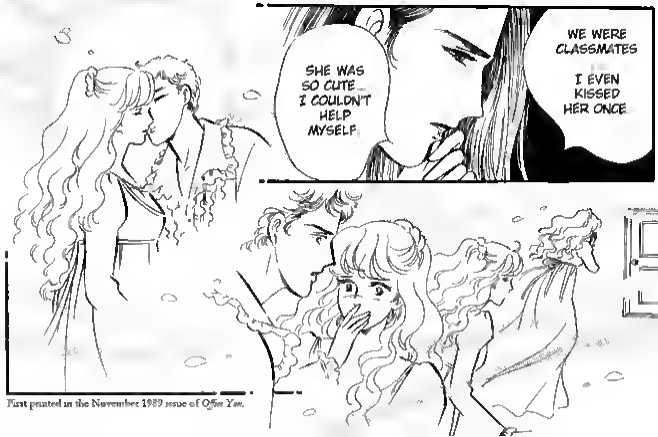
NO! STOP..!
OUCH!
IT HUUU-RTS!



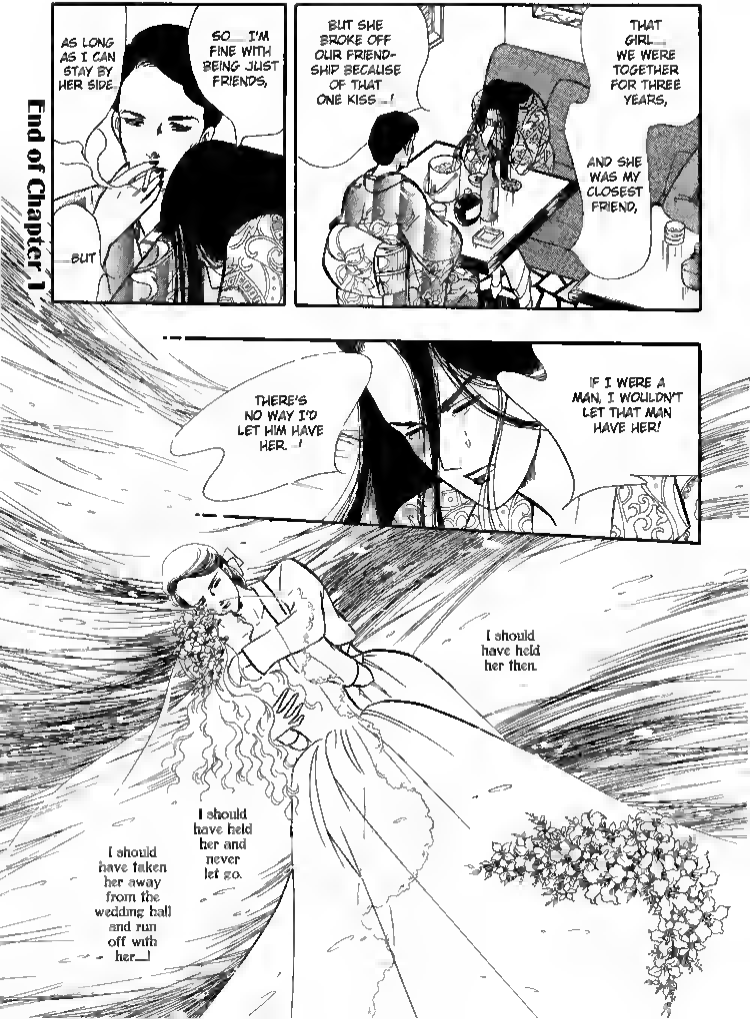
DON'T BE AFRAID.
startle
sob.. sob
sob..
I DON'T WANT TO FRIGHTEN YOU.
I JUST WANT TO MAKE LOVE TO YOU.
DON'T BE SO STIFF. RELAX...
I-... I'M SORRY, TAKASHI-SAN. I...
IT'S ALL RIGHT EVERYONE'S AFRAID THE FIRST TIME
YOU'LL GET USED TO IT RIGHT AWAY
IT'LL GET BETTER REALLY SOON...
Takashi-san, this——
this isn't my first time——


YOU SILLY GIRL. YOU LOVE HER SO MUCH,
BUT YOU DIDN'T SAY ONE WORD ABOUT IT TO HER.
YOU REALLY ARE A FOOL
YOU EVEN MADE HER WEDDING BOUQUET!
MAMA*
THAT'S ENOUGH.

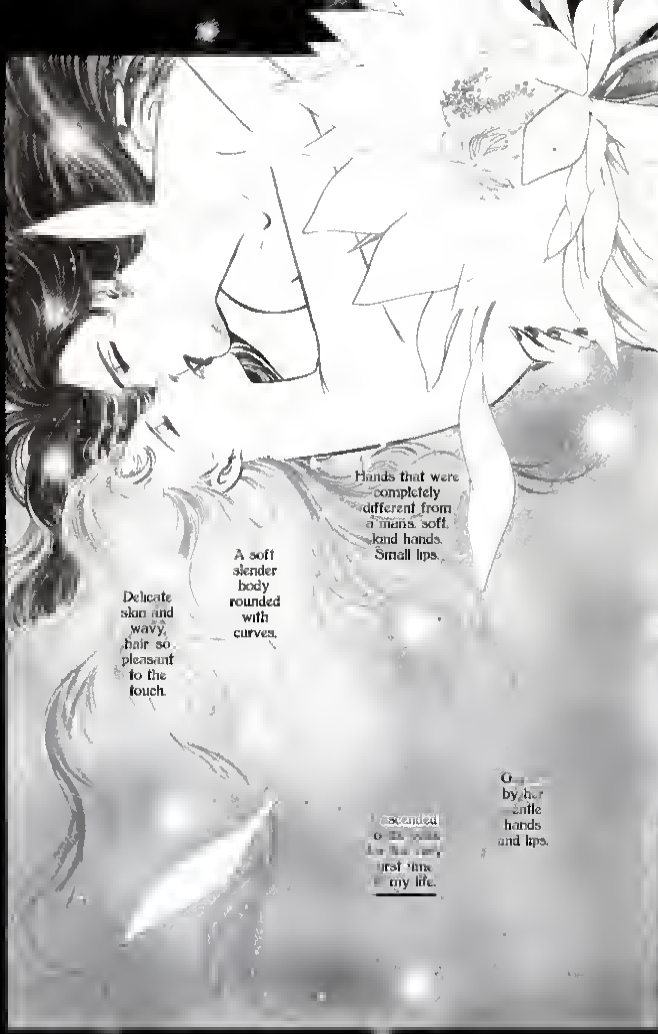
*USED TO ADDRESS THE OWNER OF A BAR.



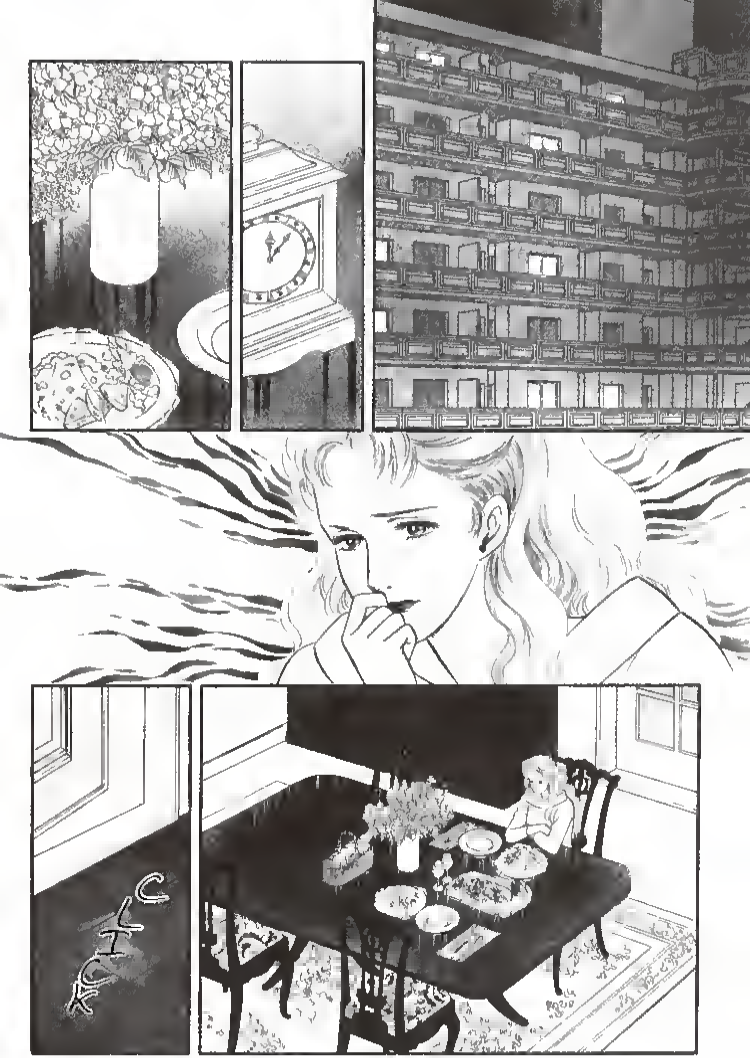
First printed in the November 1989 issue of *Office You*.

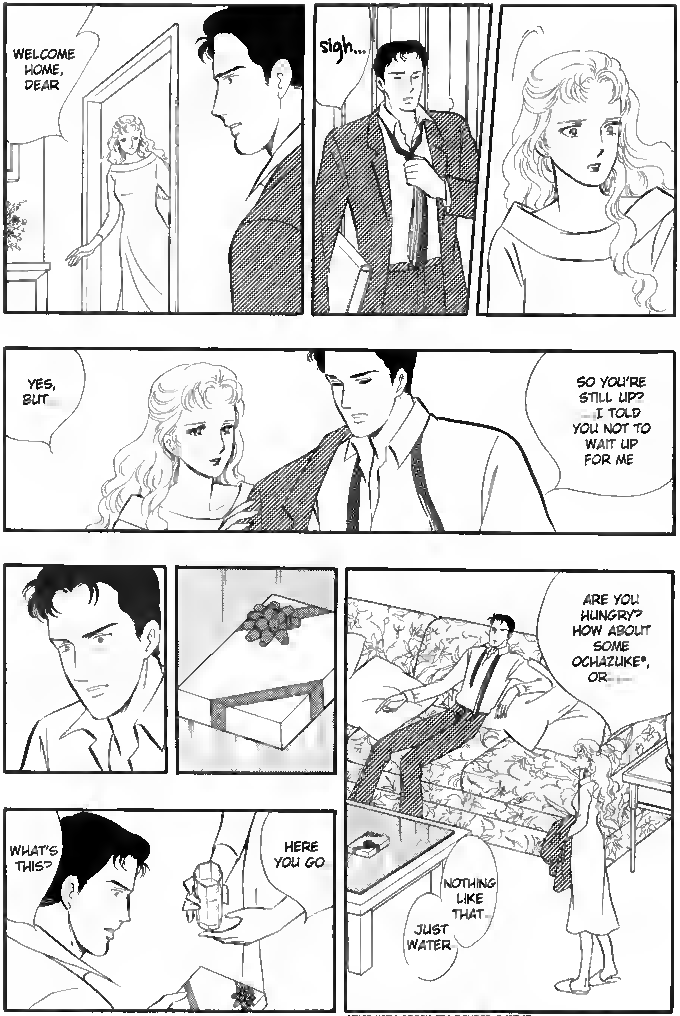

AS LONG AS I CAN STAY BY HER SIDE...
SO... I'M FINE WITH BEING JUST FRIENDS,
...BUT
BUT SHE BROKE OFF OUR FRIEND-SHIP BECAUSE OF THAT ONE KISS...!
THAT GIRL... WE WERE TOGETHER FOR THREE YEARS,
AND SHE WAS MY CLOSEST FRIEND,
THERE'S NO WAY I'D LET HIM HAVE HER...!
IF I WERE A MAN, I WOULDN'T LET THAT MAN HAVE HER!
I should have held her then.
I should have held her and never let go.
I should have taken her away from the wedding hall and run off with her...!

End of Chapter 1


Hands that were completely different from a man's. soft, kind hands. Small lips.
A soft slender body rounded with curves.
Delicate skin and wavy, hair so pleasant to the touch.
G... by h... gentle hands and lips.
...scended ... the world, ... this time, ... my life.

Queen of the Night
Moonlight Flowers
Chapter 2



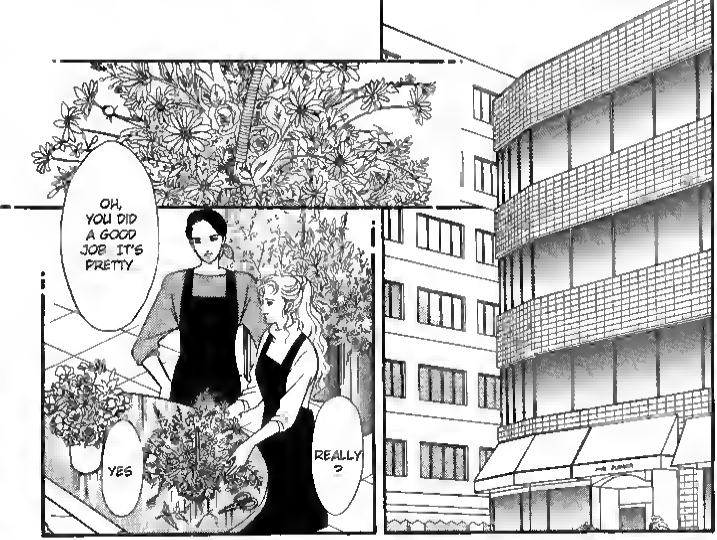

WELCOME HOME, DEAR
sigh...
YES, BUT
SO YOU'RE STILL UP? I TOLD YOU NOT TO WAIT UP FOR ME
ARE YOU HUNGRY? HOW ABOUT SOME OCHAZUKE*, OR
NOTHING LIKE THAT
JUST WATER
WHAT'S THIS?
HERE YOU GO

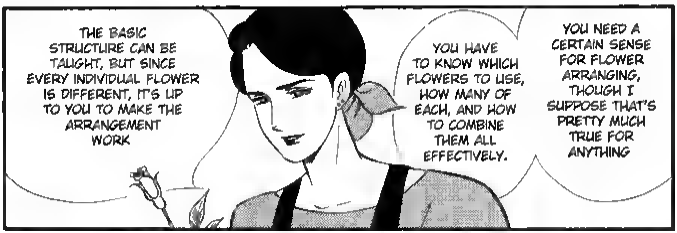
*RICE WITH GREEN TEA POURED OVER IT

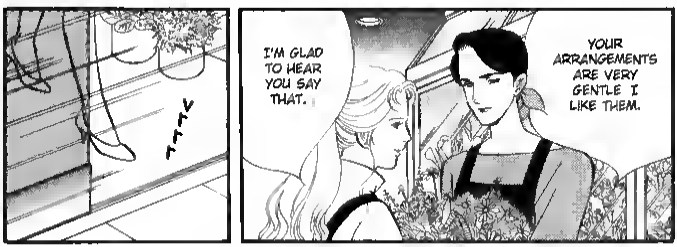
IT'S A PRESENT. TODAY IS OUR TWO-YEAR WEDDING ANNIVERSARY.
I HOPE YOU LIKE IT.
WANT TO OPEN IT?
SORRY
I FORGOT OUR ANNIVERSARY
I DO.

ALL RIGHT
TAKE ME OUT ON A DATE ON YOUR NEXT DAY OFF.
YOU'RE BUSY WITH WORK
IT'S ALL RIGHT.
HM?
BUT IN EXCHANGE

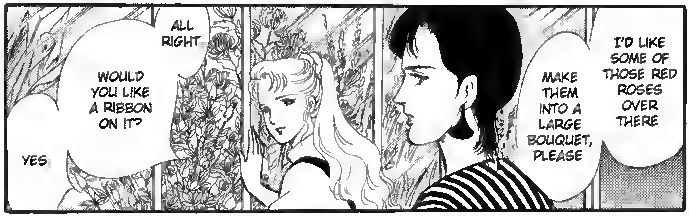
DEAR
ARE YOU ASLEEP ?

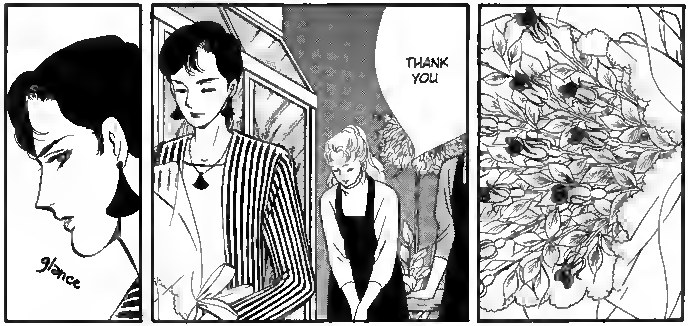

OH, YOU DID A GOOD JOB IT'S PRETTY
YES
REALLY?


THE BASIC STRUCTURE CAN BE TAUGHT, BUT SINCE EVERY INDIVIDUAL FLOWER IS DIFFERENT, IT'S UP TO YOU TO MAKE THE ARRANGEMENT WORK
YOU HAVE TO KNOW WHICH FLOWERS TO USE, HOW MANY OF EACH, AND HOW TO COMBINE THEM ALL EFFECTIVELY.
YOU NEED A CERTAIN SENSE FOR FLOWER ARRANGING, THOUGH I SUPPOSE THAT'S PRETTY MUCH TRUE FOR ANYTHING


I'M GLAD TO HEAR YOU SAY THAT.
YOUR ARRANGEMENTS ARE VERY GENTLE I LIKE THEM.

OH
WELCOME!


I'D LIKE SOME OF THOSE RED ROSES OVER THERE
MAKE THEM INTO A LARGE BOUQUET, PLEASE
ALL RIGHT
WOULD YOU LIKE A RIBBON ON IT?
YES


THANK YOU
glance

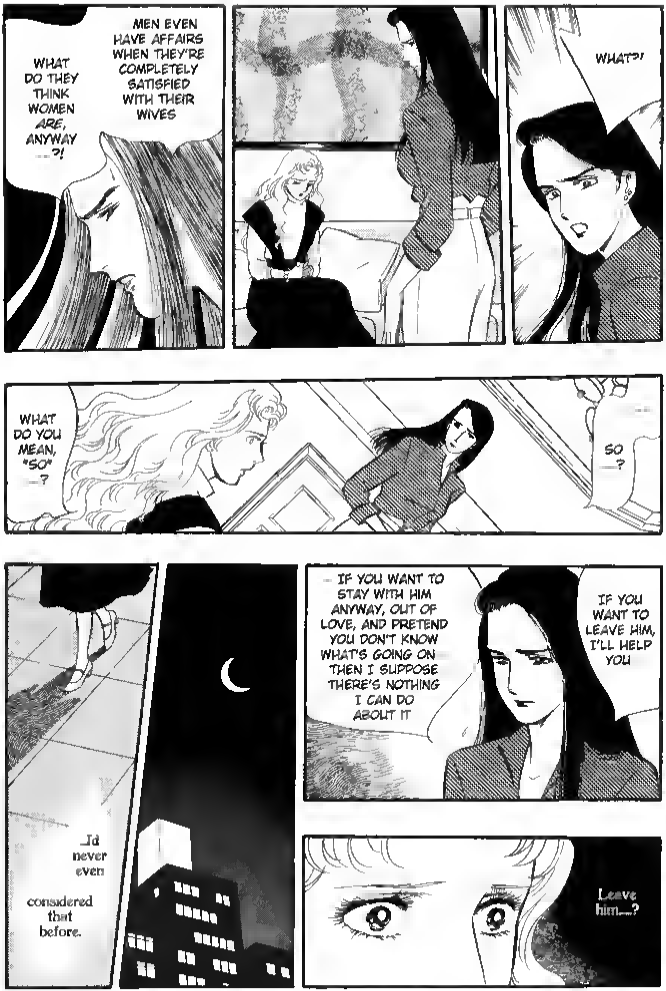
Hmph
TAKASHI-SAN HAS TO WORK LATE AGAIN TODAY, RIGHT? WOULD YOU LIKE TO HAVE DINNER OVER AT MY PLACE?
OH YES
YES, I'D LIKE THAT.
WHAT IS IT?
SAHOKO
OH Y-YES
MM!
AH, LINH

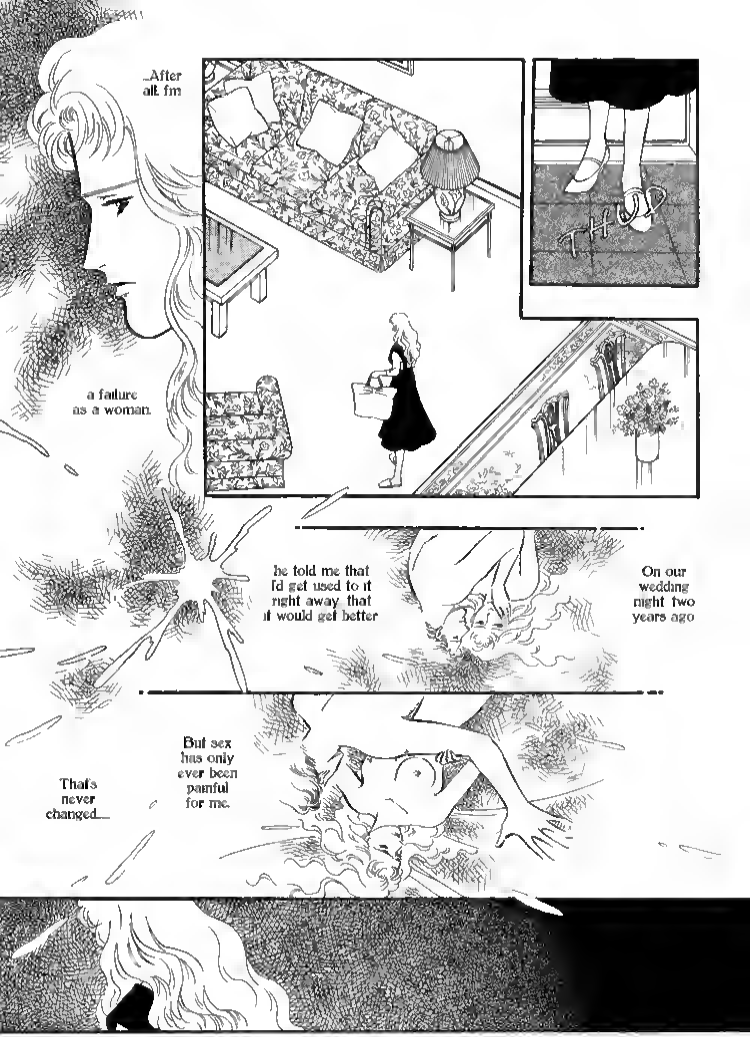
YOU-'RE REALLY LOUD
HM-PH
THE PEOPLE NEXT DOOR ARE GOING TO COMPLAIN
BUT YOU LIKE THAT ABOUT ME, DON'T YOU?

IT ISN'T THAT SIMPLE
HOLD ON
HOW SOON WILL YOU BE ABLE TO DIVORCE YOUR WIFE?
HEY,
I SAW HER TODAY
I WENT AND BOUGHT THESE ROSES FROM THE FLORIST SHE WORKS AT...
RIE!
YOU DIDN'T-
I JUST WENT TO SEE WHAT SHE LOOKED LIKE
THINGS AREN'T GOING WELL WITH YOUR HUSBAND ——?

HOW DID YOU...?
EVER SINCE
YOU CAME TO ME THREE MONTHS AGO AND TOLD ME YOU WANTED TO FIND A JOB SOMEWHERE...
NO, SINCE EVEN BEFORE THAT...
I'VE BEEN THINKING...
THAT YOU DON'T SEEM HAPPY AT ALL...
SAHOKO!

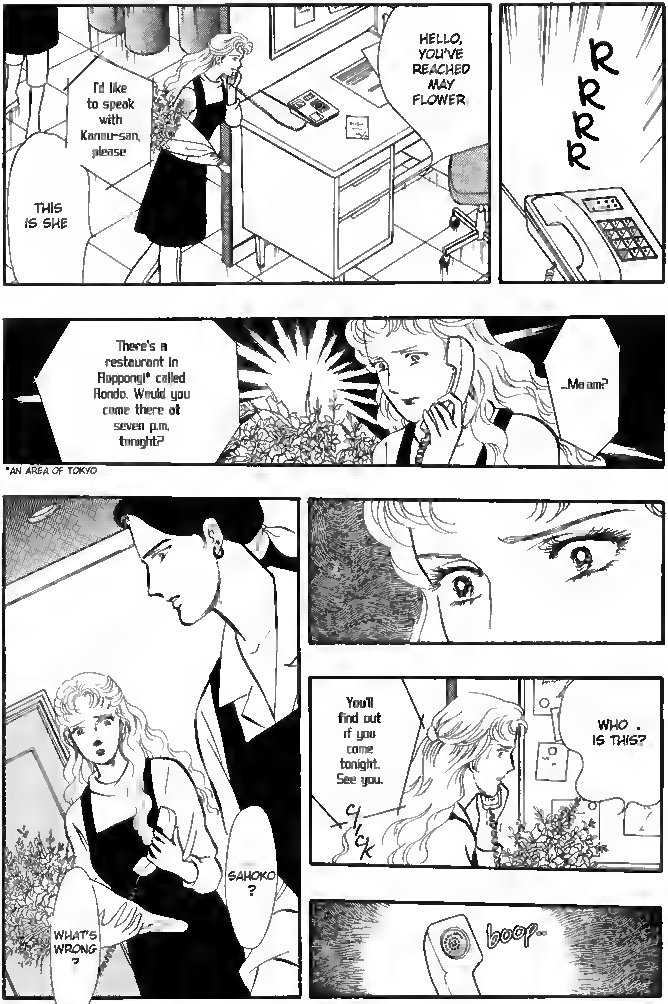
WHEN I'M ALONE AT HOME, WITH NOTHING TO DO,
I START THINKING ALL THESE SILLY THINGS...
...HE'S HAVING AN AFFAIR
IT'S PROBABLY BEEN GOING ON... FOR HALF A YEAR NOW
MEN.....!!
THERE IS SOME-THING...
IT'S UNFORGIVABLE! WITH A WOMAN LIKE YOU AS HIS WIFE, WHY WOULD HE WANT TO HAVE AN AFFAIR?! WHAT MORE COULD HE POSSIBLY WANT?!
MEN ARE SUCH BRUTES!
KAORI!


WHAT DO THEY THINK WOMEN ARE, ANYWAY—?!
MEN EVEN HAVE AFFAIRS WHEN THEY'RE COMPLETELY SATISFIED WITH THEIR WIVES
WHAT?!
WHAT DO YOU MEAN, "SO"—?
SO—?
—IF YOU WANT TO STAY WITH HIM ANYWAY, OUT OF LOVE, AND PRETEND YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON THEN I SUPPOSE THERE'S NOTHING I CAN DO ABOUT IT
IF YOU WANT TO LEAVE HIM, I'LL HELP YOU
—I'd never even considered that before.
Leave him—?


...After all, I'm
a failure as a woman.
THUD
On our wedding night two years ago
he told me that I'd get used to it right away. that it would get better
But sex has only ever been painful for me.
That's never changed....

If he ever asked for a divorce, I'd have no choice but to give him one.
and yet he hasn't said a word.
—His decision to take a mistress was only natural.
How long ago was it
that sex with me was relegated to the realm of marital duty for him?
How long ago was it
that he gave up on trying to get me turned on?
We both
learned to pretend we didn't notice how things really were....
I'm a failure as a wife. What could I possibly say about it...?
If we at least had a child together things would be different....

THANKS FOR THE MEAL
TAKE CARE
I'LL SEE YOU LATER
YES?
DEAR
YES, THINGS HAVE BEEN BUSY AT WORK LATELY
DEAR WILL YOU BE OUT LATE AGAIN TODAY?
We're only married on paper..
We're just two strangers who share a bedroom.
Could we really... be called husband and wife?
for getting married for the wrong reasons....
This is my punishment

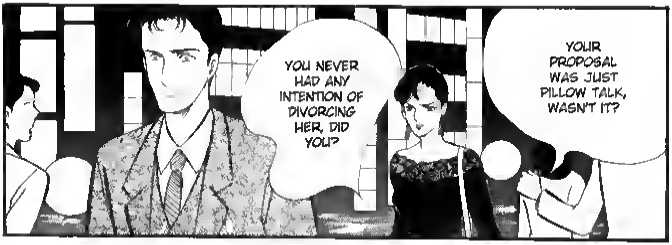

I'd like to speak with Kanno-san, please
THIS IS SHE
HELLO, YOU'VE REACHED MAY FLOWER
RRRR
There's a restaurant in Roppongi* called Rondo. Would you come there at seven p.m. tonight?
...Ma'am?
*AN AREA OF TOKYO
SAHOKO ?
WHAT'S WRONG ?
You'll find out if you come tonight. See you.
click
WHO . IS THIS?
beep...

But...
I'M SCARED, KAORU.
YOU HAVE TO KEEP A STIFF UPPER LIP
SHE ASKED YOU TO MEET HER!
WELCOME.
WHO...
GURU
HUH?
OH, IT LOOKS LIKE SHE'S HERE.

PLEASE, HAVE A SEAT, MA'AM
AND YOUR COMPANION AS WELL.
I ASKED HER TO COME, DEAR.
SAHO-
rattle
WHAT ARE YOU DOING, RIE?!
I HAD TO TAKE MATTERS INTO MY OWN HANDS! YOU KEPT PUTTING IT OFF!
TELL HER, RIGHT HERE AND NOW!
MAKE IT CLEAR TO HER YOU WANT A DIVORCE!
AREN'T YOU SICK OF SLEEPING WITH THAT COLD FISH?!

SLAP
SAHOKO!
WHAT'RE YOU DOING?!
S-SIR.
THIS IS A PROB-LEM.
YOU TOLD ME OVER AND OVER, WHEN YOU WERE DRUNK!
YOU TOLD ME THAT!
SIR!
YOU SAID SHE WAS BORING. THAT SHE NEVER MADE ANY NOISE OR WORKED UP A SWEAT WITH YOU!
SA-

DON'T TOUCH HER!
SMACK
DON'T TOUCH HER WITH YOUR DIRTY HANDS!!
WHAT'S GOING ON?
YOU CAN MEET WITH HER SOME OTHER DAY.
I'M TAKING CHARGE OF HER


YOU NEVER HAD ANY INTENTION OF DIVORCING HER, DID YOU?
YOUR PROPOSAL WAS JUST PILLOW TALK, WASN'T IT?

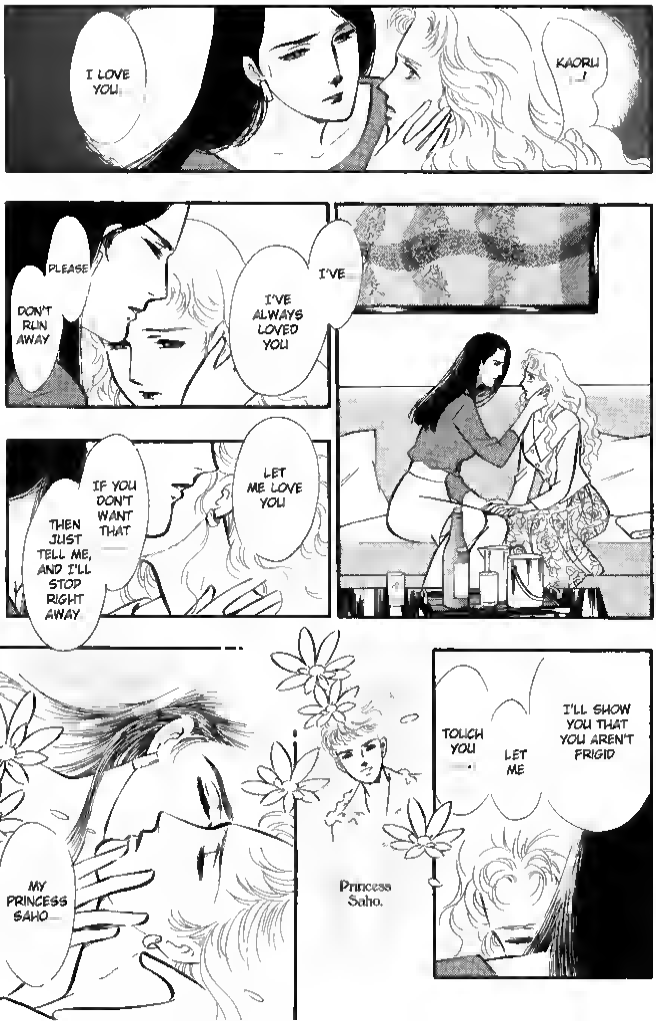
I'M NOT SO SURE ANYMORE
I DID
BUT...

SLAP
DON'T MAKE A FOOL OF ME!

DRINK THIS
...DON'T LET WHAT SHE SAID GET TO YOU.
SHE'S A FOOLISH WOMAN WHO BELIEVED THE CLICHES SPOUTED BY A FOOLISH MAN BENT ON HAVING AN AFFAIR WITH HER.
...BUT IT'S ALL TRUE
SAHO-KO
I
IT'S TRUE
I'M TERRIBLE IN BED I'M PROBABLY THE WORST WOMAN AT SEX EVER.
NEVER GOT TURNED ON WHEN WE WERE HAVING SEX.

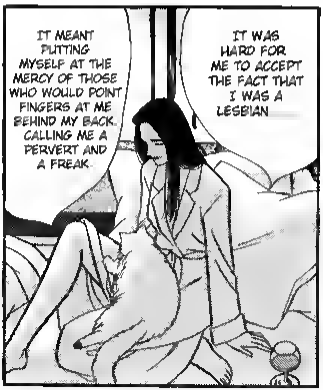
SAHO-KO...
NO, IT IS...
IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT, SAHOKO.
HE'S THE ONE THAT'S TERRIBLE IN BED, NOT YOU!
THERE ARE PLENTY OF MEN WHO BLAME THEIR PARTNERS FOR THEIR OWN FAILURE IN BED.
BACK WHEN I WAS IN COLLEGE...
A MAN I'D BEEN SEEING FOR JUST A LITTLE WHILE PUSHED ALCOHOL ON ME
AND THEN VIRTUALLY RAPED ME
THAT WAS MY FIRST SEXUAL EXPER-IENCE
NO MATTER HOW MANY TIMES I TELL MYSELF
THAT IT'S NOT THE SAME PERSON,
THAT IT'S MY HUSBAND I'M WITH, AND THAT IT'S NOTHING LIKE THAT TIME BEFORE,
I CAN'T HELP FEELING
LIKE I'M BEING RAPED

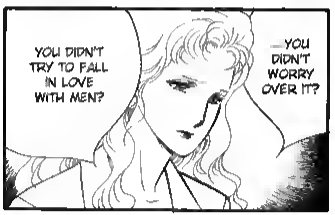
SAHO-KO.
SAHO-KO
YOU POOR THING..
EVEN IF YOU'RE MARRIED IF HE'S FORCING YOU TO HAVE SEX WITH HIM WHEN YOU DON'T WANT TO,
THAT'S RAPE
IT'S RAPE.....!
HOW WELL! I CAN'T BELIEVE THAT'S BEEN HAPPENING TO YOU


I LOVE YOU
KAORU!
PLEASE DON'T RUN AWAY
I'VE ALWAYS LOVED YOU
I'VE
LET ME LOVE YOU
IF YOU DON'T WANT THAT
THEN JUST TELL ME, AND I'LL STOP RIGHT AWAY
I'LL SHOW YOU THAT YOU AREN'T FRIGID
LET ME TOUCH YOU
Princess Saho.
MY PRINCESS SAHO

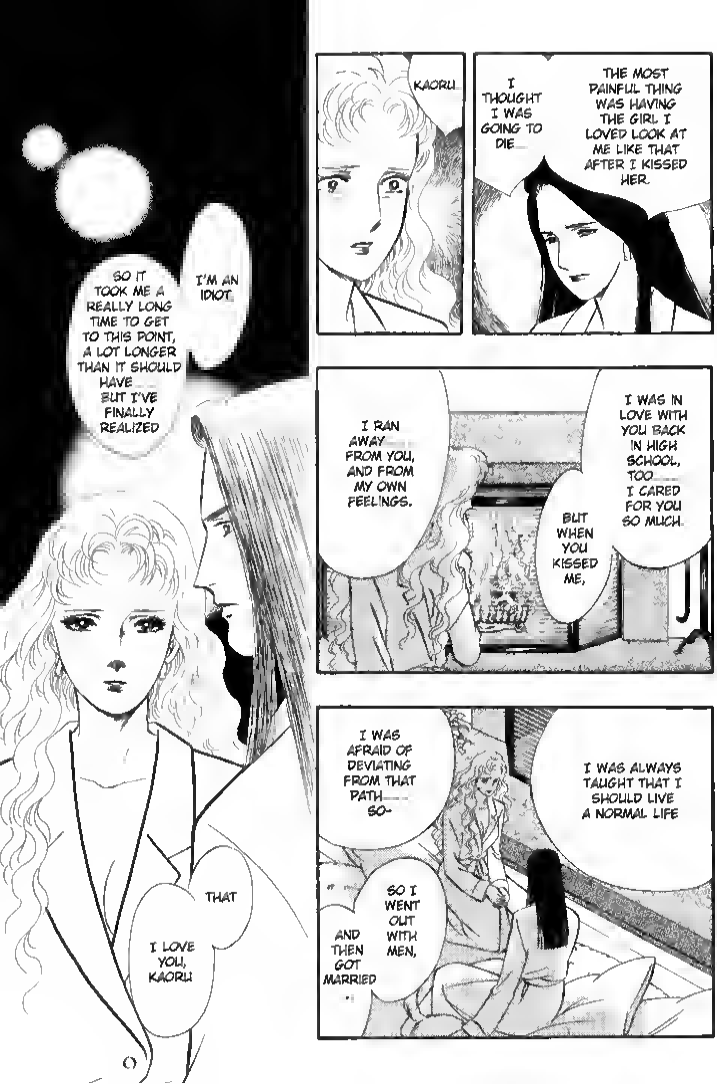
—I TOLD YOU BEFORE
THAT I WAS NEVER GOING TO GET MARRIED BECAUSE I DIDN'T WANT TO BECOME SOME MAN'S SLAVE
THAT WASN'T TRUE
THE REAL REASON—— IS THAT I CAN'T FALL IN LOVE WITH MEN.

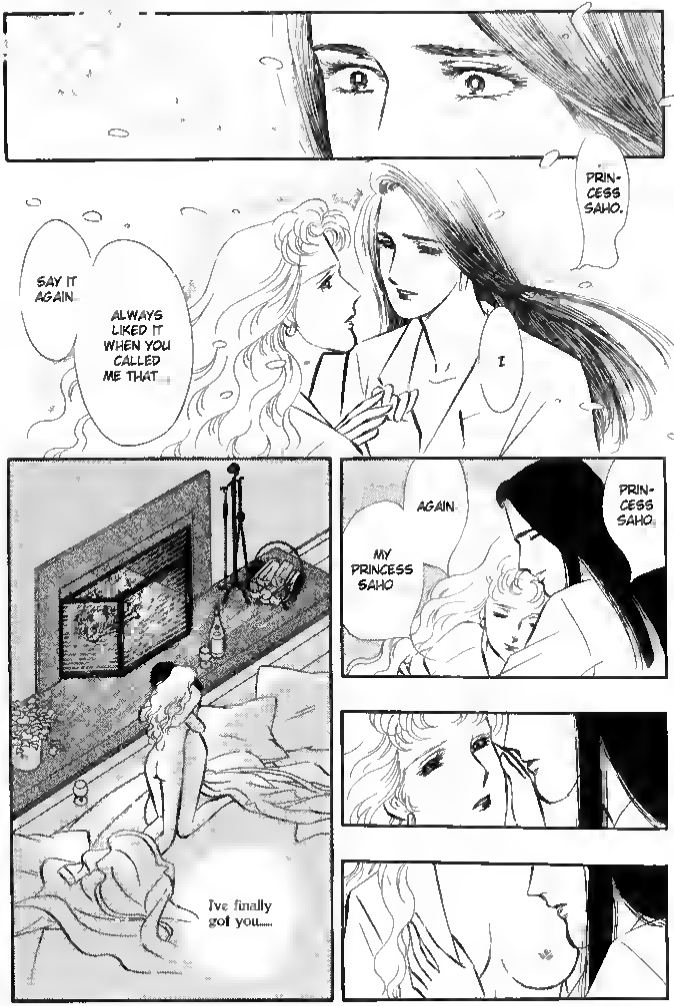
I DON'T KNOW WHY.
EVER SINCE I WAS YOUNG, I'VE ONLY EVER FALLEN IN LOVE WITH GIRLS.
IT'S NOT LIKE I'VE HAD MUCH CHOICE IN THE MATTER.
THIS IS THE WAY I WAS BORN. MY ONLY OPTION WAS TO ACKNOWLEDGE WHAT I WAS AND LIVE MY LIFE ACCORDINGLY.

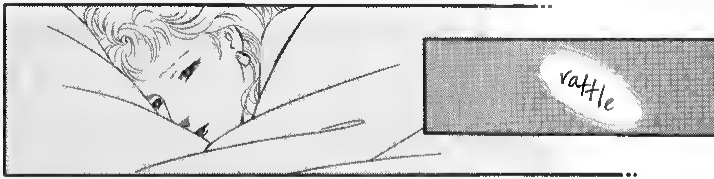

IT WAS HARD FOR ME TO ACCEPT THE FACT THAT I WAS A LESBIAN.
IT MEANT PUTTING MYSELF AT THE MERCY OF THOSE WHO WOULD POINT FINGERS AT ME BEHIND MY BACK, CALLING ME A PERVERT AND A FREAK.

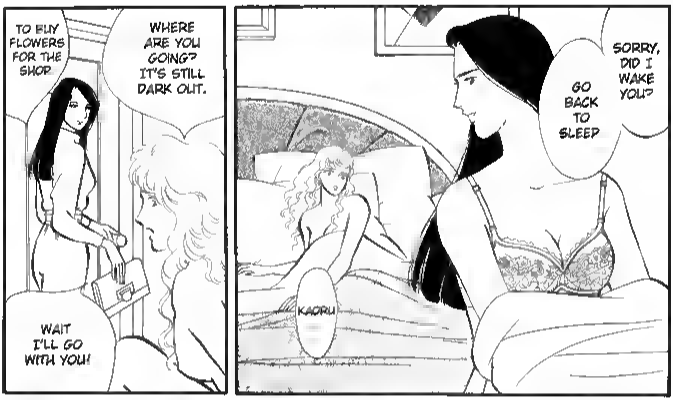

—YOU DIDN'T WORRY OVER IT?
YOU DIDN'T TRY TO FALL IN LOVE WITH MEN?

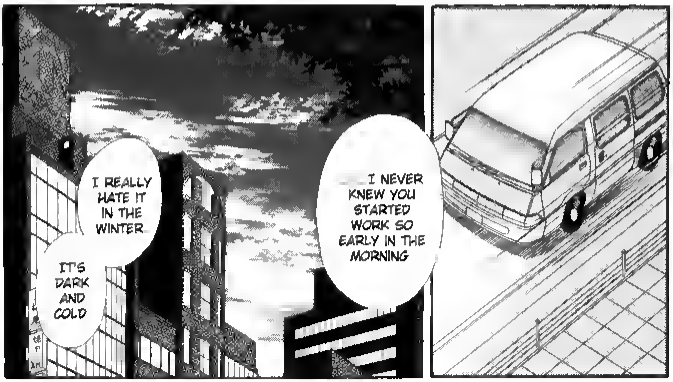
OF COURSE I WORRIED ABOUT IT
BUT FALLING IN LOVE WITH A MAN WAS COMPLETELY OUT OF THE QUESTION FOR ME


KAORU...
I THOUGHT I WAS GOING TO DIE...
THE MOST PAINFUL THING WAS HAVING THE GIRL I LOVED LOOK AT ME LIKE THAT AFTER I KISSED HER.
I WAS IN LOVE WITH YOU BACK IN HIGH SCHOOL, TOO... I CARED FOR YOU SO MUCH.
I RAN AWAY FROM YOU, AND FROM MY OWN FEELINGS.
BUT WHEN YOU KISSED ME,
I WAS ALWAYS TAUGHT THAT I SHOULD LIVE A NORMAL LIFE
I WAS AFRAID OF DEVIATING FROM THAT PATH—— SO—
SO I WENT OUT WITH MEN,
AND THEN GOT MARRIED
I'M AN IDIOT.
SO IT TOOK ME A REALLY LONG TIME TO GET TO THIS POINT, A LOT LONGER THAN IT SHOULD HAVE... BUT I'VE FINALLY REALIZED
THAT
I LOVE YOU, KAORU


PRIN-
CESS
SAHO.
I
SAY IT
AGAIN.
ALWAYS
LIKED IT
WHEN YOU
CALLED
ME THAT.
I've finally
got you.....
AGAIN.
PRIN-
CESS
SAHO.
MY
PRINCESS
SAHO

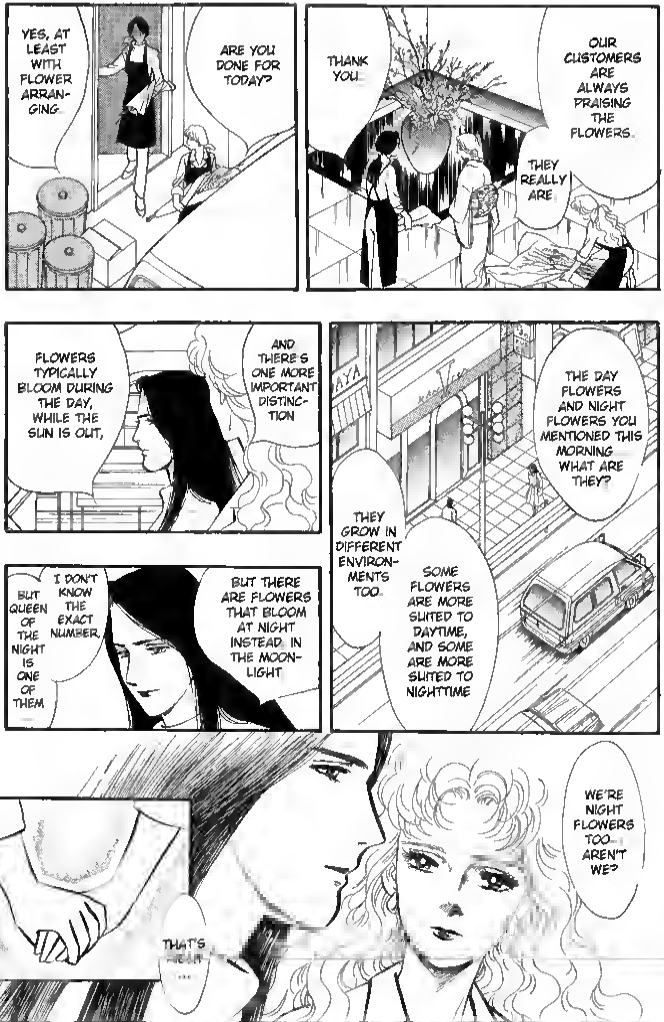

rattle


TO BUY FLOWERS FOR THE SHOP.
WHERE ARE YOU GOING? IT'S STILL DARK OUT.
WAIT I'LL GO WITH YOU!
SORRY, DID I WAKE YOU?
GO BACK TO SLEEP
KAORU


I REALLY HATE IT IN THE WINTER.
IT'S DARK AND COLD
I NEVER KNEW YOU STARTED WORK SO EARLY IN THE MORNING

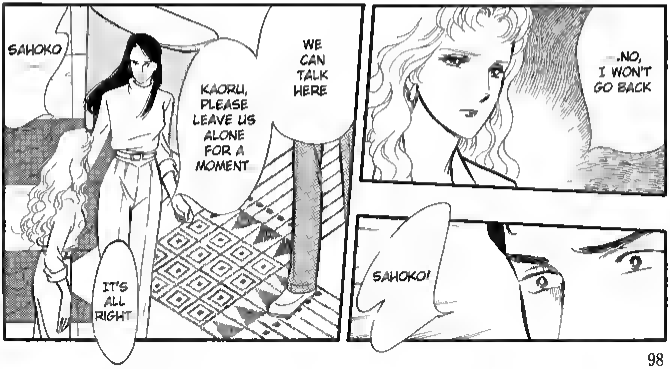
IT'S REALLY HARD TO GET OUT OF BED THOSE DAYS
BUT I HAVE TO BE THE ONE
WHO BUYS THE FLOWERS FOR THE SHOP
I HAVE TO LOOK THE FLOWERS OVER MYSELF AND MAKE SURE THEY'RE ACCEPT-ABLE
I LOVE OPENING THE PACK-AGES
IT'S ALWAYS EXCI-TING
FLOWERS BROUGHT HERE FROM FARAWAY LANDS——
ALL DIFFERENT, ALL BEAUTIFUL
FLOW-ERS GROWN OUT-DOORS
FLOWERS GROWN IN GREEN-HOUSES

THERE ARE ALSO DAY FLOWERS AND NIGHT FLOWERS
DAY FLOWERS AND NIGHT FLOWERS?
WOW. THAT'S STUNNING


YES, AT LEAST WITH FLOWER ARRANGING.
ARE YOU DONE FOR TODAY?
THANK YOU.
OUR CUSTOMERS ARE ALWAYS PRAISING THE FLOWERS.
THEY REALLY ARE.
FLOWERS TYPICALLY BLOOM DURING THE DAY, WHILE THE SUN IS OUT,
AND THERE'S ONE MORE IMPORTANT DISTINCTION
AYA
THE DAY FLOWERS AND NIGHT FLOWERS YOU MENTIONED THIS MORNING WHAT ARE THEY?
THEY GROW IN DIFFERENT ENVIRONMENTS TOO.
SOME FLOWERS ARE MORE SUITED TO DAYTIME, AND SOME ARE MORE SUITED TO NIGHTTIME
BUT THERE ARE FLOWERS THAT BLOOM AT NIGHT INSTEAD, IN THE MOONLIGHT.
I DON'T KNOW THE EXACT NUMBER.
BUT QUEEN OF THE NIGHT IS ONE OF THEM.
WE'RE NIGHT FLOWERS TOO... AREN'T WE?
THAT'S RIGHT...

DEAR
STAND
I'M BACK
WELCOME BACK, TENCHOU KANOU-SAN,
YOU HAVE A VISITOR

I WANT TO TALK TO YOU, SAHOKO
WOULD YOU PLEASE COME BACK HOME?

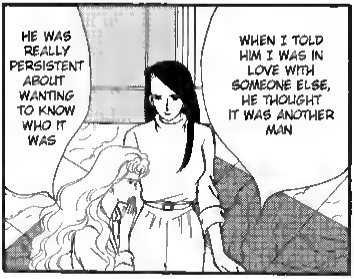

SAHOKO
WE CAN TALK HERE
KAORU, PLEASE LEAVE US ALONE FOR A MOMENT
IT'S ALL RIGHT
NO, I WON'T GO BACK
SAHOKO!

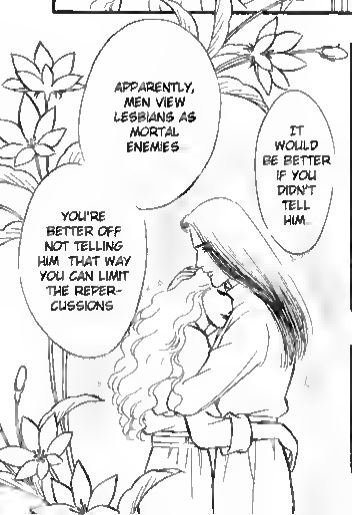
DEAR
PLEASE DIVORCE ME
SAHOKO...
Who does that woman think she is?
She looked at me like I was the enemy
Even if she's Sahoko's friend that's going too far!
And before, too she...
Hard
I'M SORRY... I APOLOGIZE YOU CAN SEE HOW BAD I FEEL ABOUT THIS
I KNOW I HURT YOU...
I
BUT PLEASE DON'T ASK FOR A DIVORCE
I SHOULDN'T HAVE MARRIED YOU. IT WAS A MISTAKE
I FEEL TERRIBLE ABOUT HAVING DONE THAT TO YOU
PLEASE, LEAVE ME AND MARRY HER INSTEAD FIND HAPPINESS WITH HER
TENCHOU
I'M NOT INTERESTED IN MARRYING HER!

SAHOKO
ISN'T THAT RIGHT? YOU TOLD HER YOU WERE GOING TO MARRY HER, DIDN'T YOU?!
BUT . THE TWO OF YOU STILL MADE A COMPLETE LAUGHINGSTOCK OF ME!
DEAR
I'LL BE HONEST WITH YOU
I'M IN LOVE WITH SOMEONE ELSE
I WANT US TO START OVER
WOULD YOU AT LEAST GIVE ME ONE MORE CHANCE?
I DON'T WANT TO DESTROY OUR MARRIAGE OVER SOMETHING LIKE THIS
WELL, IT MIGHT HAVE HAPPENED WHEN I WAS DRUNK BUT
I DON'T REMEMBER EVER HAVING SPOKEN ABOUT YOU LIKE THAT TO HER.
IT ISN'T HOW I REALLY FEEL I STILL LOVE YOU I HONESTLY DO
THAT'S WHY I WANT A DIVORCE
HUH...? HUH?!

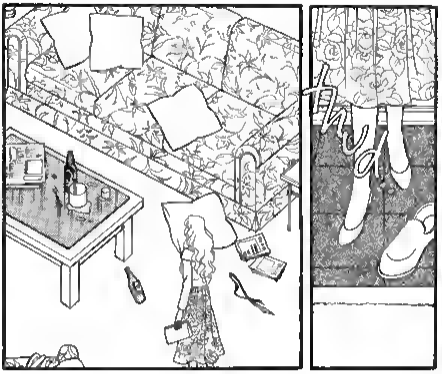
SAHOKO!
VFFF
BAM

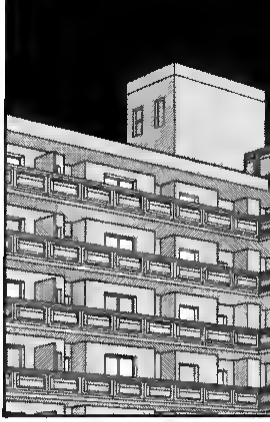
YES
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
HE STORMED OUT, STEAMING

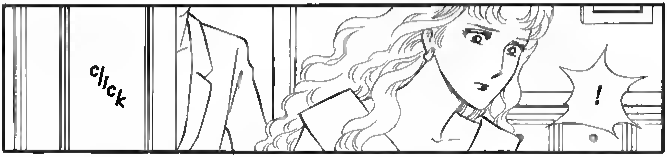

HE WAS REALLY PERSISTENT ABOUT WANTING TO KNOW WHO IT WAS
WHEN I TOLD HIM I WAS IN LOVE WITH SOMEONE ELSE, HE THOUGHT IT WAS ANOTHER MAN

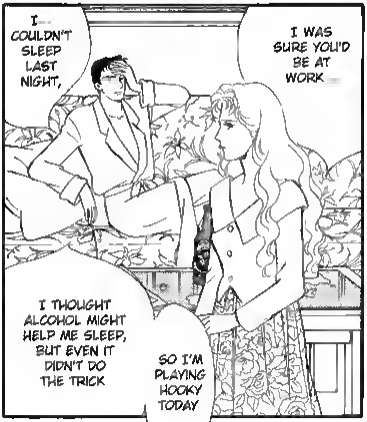

APPARENTLY, MEN VIEW LESBIANS AS MORTAL ENEMIES
IT WOULD BE BETTER IF YOU DIDN'T TELL HIM.
YOU'RE BETTER OFF NOT TELLING HIM THAT WAY YOU CAN LIMIT THE REPERCUSSIONS

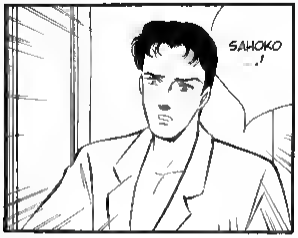
I'M SURE THE THOUGHT NEVER OCCURRED TO HIM
THE EXISTENCE OF LESBIANISM ISN'T ACKNOWLEDGED IN JAPAN

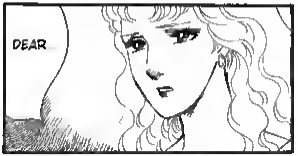

Ahya




click
!


I... COULDN'T SLEEP LAST NIGHT,
I WAS SURE YOU'D BE AT WORK...
I THOUGHT ALCOHOL MIGHT HELP ME SLEEP, BUT EVEN IT DIDN'T DO THE TRICK
SO I'M PLAYING HOOKY TODAY


SAHOKO...!


DEAR

SAHOKO
I'LL BE OUT OF YOUR HAIR AS SOON AS I'VE GOTTEN THEM ALL TOGETHER
I'M ONLY PLANNING TO TAKE MY CLOTHING, SHOES, AND BAGS
I CAME FOR MY THINGS
I'VE BEEN THINKING EVERY DAY ABOUT WHAT YOU SAID BEFORE, AND I STILL DON'T UNDERSTAND
I'VE NEVER GOTTEN THE FEELING THAT YOU WERE SEEING ANOTHER MAN
BECAUSE I HAD AN AFFAIR, YOU'RE TRYING TO IMPLY THAT YOU DID TOO THAT'S ALL IT IS RIGHT?
YOU'RE LYING ABOUT THERE BEING ANOTHER MAN, AREN'T YOU?
YOU JUST DIDN'T KNOW WHAT WAS REALLY GOING ON
AND YOUR JOB IS ONLY PART-TIME YOU WORK AT KUNO-SAN'S FLOWER SHOP FROM NOON TO FIVE
IS THAT YOU'VE BEEN WORKING OUTSIDE THE HOUSE FOR THE PAST THREE MONTHS
THE ONLY CHANGE THAT'S HAPPENED IN THE PAST THREE YEARS

I'M TELLING THE TRUTH
I HAVE A LOVER.
flash
whoosh
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!
Noooo!
DEAR! WHAT ARE

TELL ME! DOES YOUR LOVER GIVE YOU PLEASURE?!
HOW DOES HE MAKE LOVE TO YOU?!
AH ...!
DOES HE MAKE YOU CRY OUT?
WHEN I TOOK YOU TO BED, YOU ALWAYS LAY THERE COLDLY, LIKE A CORPSE! YOU NEVER EVEN GOT WET!
KAORU IS GENTLE.
SHE ISN'T ROUGH WITH ME, LIKE THIS .....!
KAORU ...?
ARE YOU... TALKING ABOUT KUNO-SAN?
YOUR LOVER'S ... A WOMAN ?!

◆ End of Chapter 2 ◆

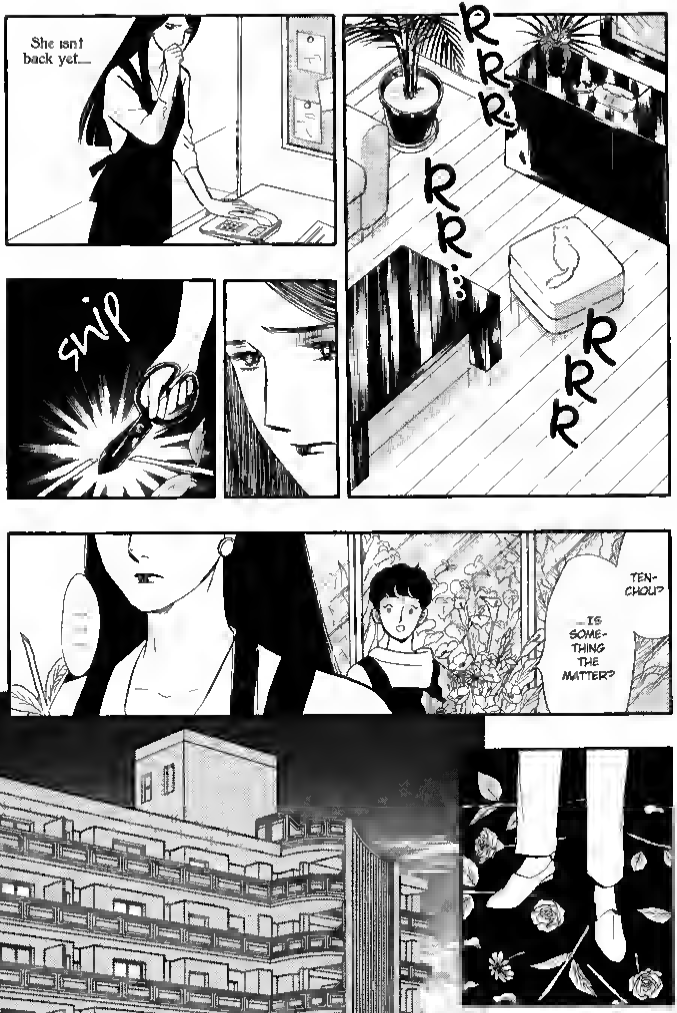
First printed in the Deluxe Hana to Yume (1999 issue 1)

Queen of the Night
Moonlight Flowers
— Chapter 3 —

I was cuckolded by a woman...?
IT CAN'T BE TRUE. I CAN'T BELIEVE IT.....
IMPOSSIBLE...
You can't be serious...
You're saying I married a lesbian?
KAORU AND I ARE IN LOVE.
...NO. IT'S TRUE. MY LOVER IS A WOMAN.
THERE ARE MEN NAMED KAORU.
YOU WERE TALKING ABOUT A MAN NAMED KAORU, WEREN'T YOU...?
In love?!
Two women?!
...I've never been so insulted!

YOU'RE IN LOVE?!
HOW DO THE TWO OF YOU HAVE SEX, ANYWAY?!
RIP
DEAR!
NOOO!
WELL?!
YOU'RE SAYING YOU LIKE HER VIBRATOR MORE THAN MY THING, IS THAT IT?!!
ST-

.....I WON'T DIVORCE YOU.
I WON'T LET YOU GO TO HER.
NO MATTER WHAT!!
SLAP!
KAORU
If would be better if you didn't tell him.
Apparently men view lesbians as mortal enemies.
RRR
RRR

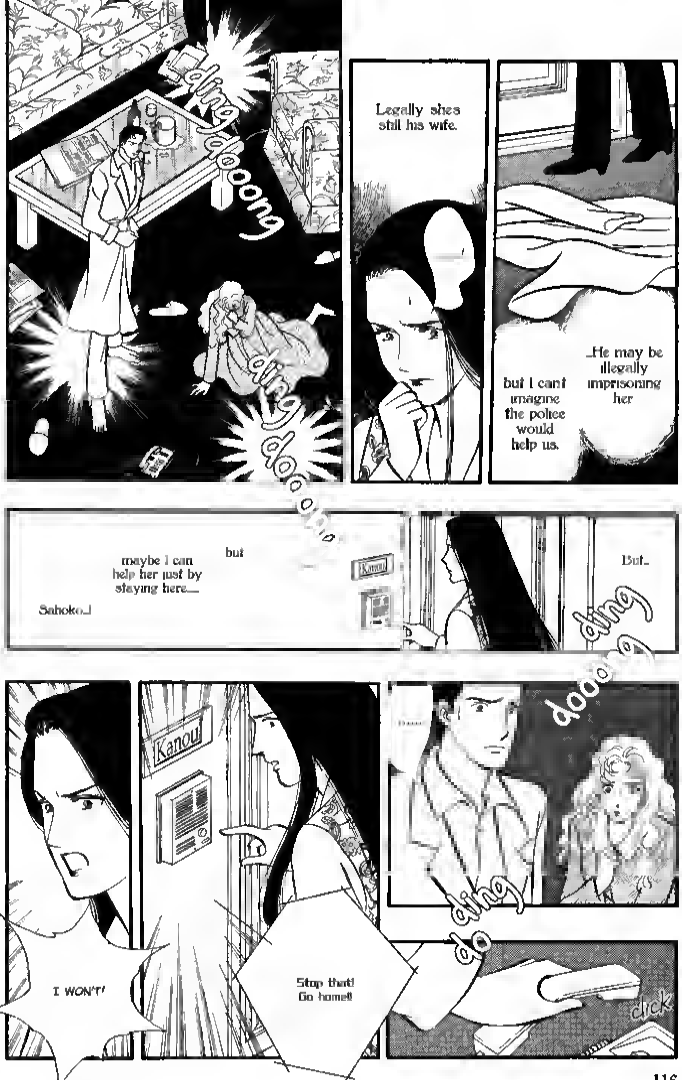

She isn't back yet...
RRR
RRR
RRR
snip
TEN-CHOU?
...IS SOME-THING THE MATTER?

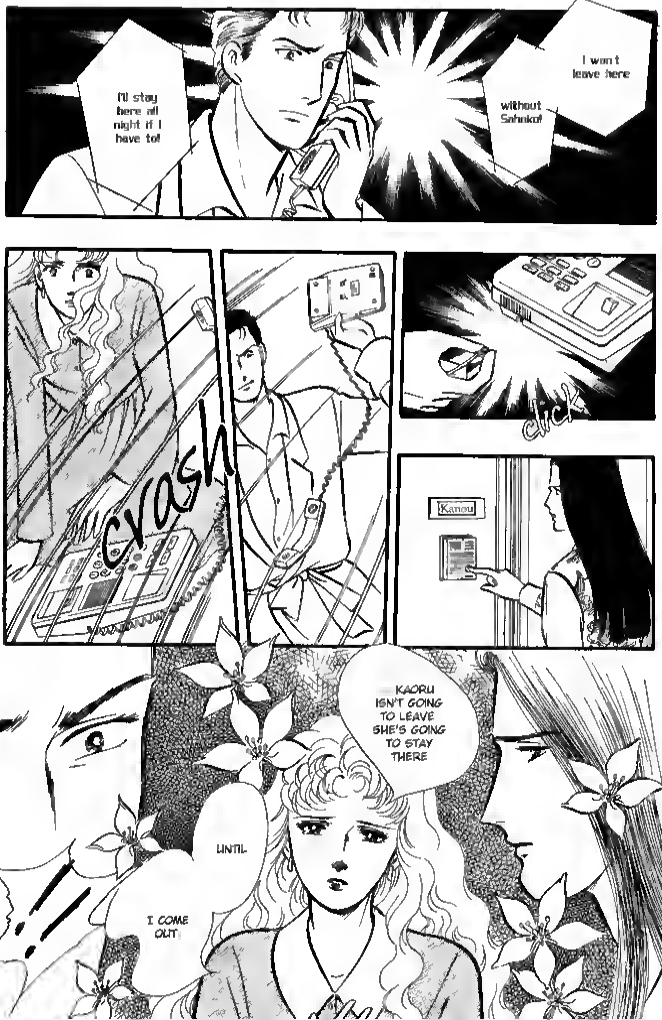
ding dooong
YES, WHO IS IT?
It's Kuno.
click
YOU'RE MISTAKEN, ARE YOU NOT?
THIS IS SAHOKO'S HOME.
I'VE COME FOR SAHOKO
PLEASE GIVE HER BACK TO ME.

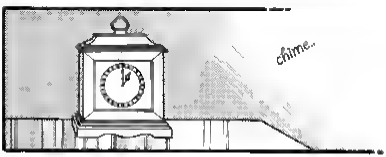
crash
SMACK!
SAHOKO!
SAHOKO ?!
NO!!
PLEASE, LET ME GO!
KAORU'S HERE, ISN'T SHE?
KANOU-SAN!
SAHOKO MAY STILL BE YOUR WIFE UNDER THE LAW,
BUT YOUR ACTIONS RIGHT NOW CONSTITUTE ILLEGAL IMPRISONMENT!
NO...!

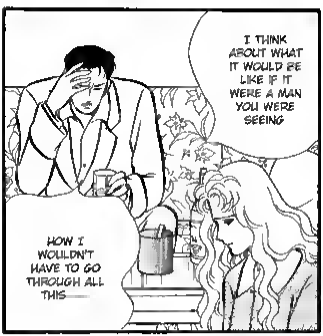
SAHOKO!
BANG
BANG!
NO!
NOO-
OO!
KANOU-
SAN,
STOP!
LET
SAHOKO
GO!!
COULD YOU
NOT SHOUT
RIGHT OUTSIDE
MY DOOR?
IT'S QUITE A
NUISANCE
YOU
MAY
BE
HER
FRIEND,
BUT YOU
SHOULDN'T
INTERFERE
IN SOMEONE
ELSE'S
DOMESTIC
DISPUTE
SLAM!
LEAVE,
NOW!

sob
sob...!
sob.....
YOU SHOULD JUST DO WHATEVER YOU WANT IT'S NOT LIKE I'M STRONG ENOUGH TO STOP YOU
BUT
IT WON'T CHANGE THE WAY I FEEL...!
TO RAPE ME AGAIN...?
ARE YOU GOING
Sahoko.....!

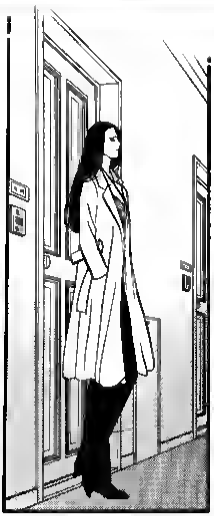

ding dooong
ding dooong
Legally she's still his wife.
but I can't imagine the police would help us.
...He may be illegally imprisoning her
but
maybe I can help her just by staying here....
Saboko...!
Kanou
But...
ding dooong
Kanou
I WON'T!
Stop that! Go home!
ding dooong
click


I'll stay here all night if I have to!
I won't leave here without Sahnkot
crash
click
Kaoru
KAORU ISN'T GOING TO LEAVE SHE'S GOING TO STAY THERE
UNTIL I COME OUT.


chime..


I THINK ABOUT WHAT IT WOULD BE LIKE IF IT WERE A MAN YOU WERE SEEING
HOW I WOULDN'T HAVE TO GO THROUGH ALL THIS

WHY
A WOMAN ?



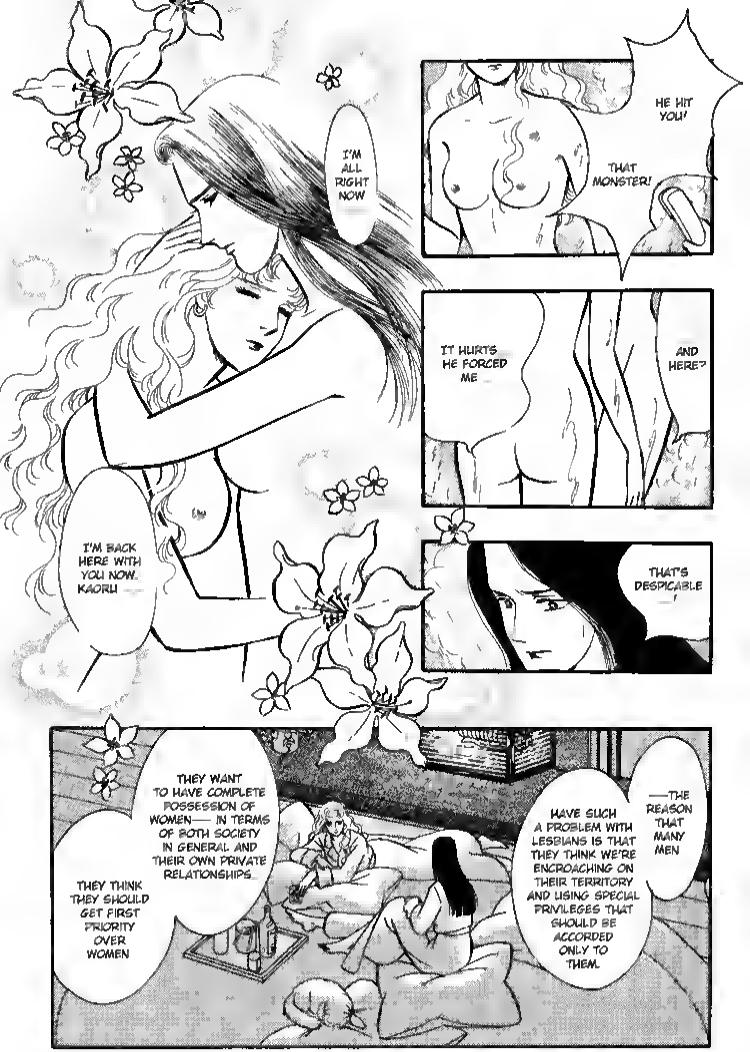
THIS HAS GONE ON LONG ENOUGH ALREADY. JUST LET ME GO.
IF
YOU CAN'T STAY HERE AND GUARD ME FOREVER.
YOU'LL HAVE TO GO TO WORK TOMORROW.
I BET THEY'LL BE DEVASTATED WHEN THEY FIND OUT THAT THEIR SWEET LITTLE GIRL, THE ONE THEY'RE SO PROUD OF, HAS RUN OFF WITH A LESBIAN!
I'LL TELL YOUR PARENTS WHAT'S GOING ON!
YOU SNEAK OUT AND GO TO HER.
I CAN AND I WILL!
YOU'RE TOO PROUD YOU WOULD NEVER TELL ANYONE ABOUT HOW A WOMAN STOLE YOUR WIFE AWAY.
THERE'S NO WAY YOU'LL ACTUALLY DO THAT.

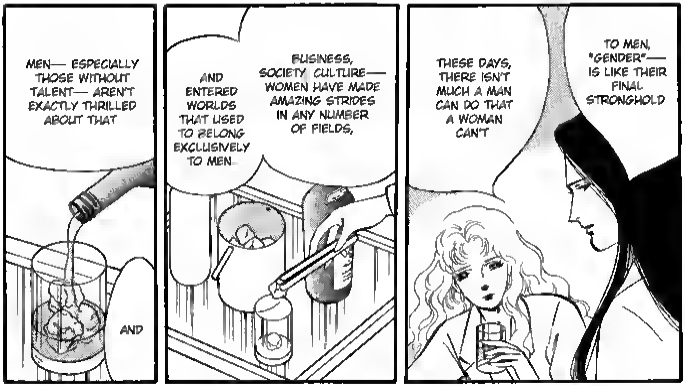
DON'T
I COULD SEE MYSELF PUTTING UP POSTERS AT THAT WOMAN'S SHOP SAYING, "KUNO KAORU IS A LESBIAN!"
I NEVER USED TO THINK THEY HAD ANYTHING TO DO WITH ME——BUT NOW, FOR THE FIRST TIME I THINK I CAN UNDERSTAND HOW THOSE FOOLISH MEN FEEL
IN THE NEWSPAPER——THEY ALWAYS HAVE THESE STORIES ABOUT MEN WHO PESTER THEIR EX-GIRLFRIENDS WITH PHONE CALLS AFTER THEY'VE BEEN DUMPED.
YES
OR SENDING A FAX SAYING "THE HEAD OF THIS STORE IS A LESBIAN!"
OR FLOODING THE SHOP WITH FAKE ORDERS BY PHONE!
SAY THINGS LIKE THAT IS——
HEARING YOU——
PLEASE DON'T EVEN SAY THOSE THINGS

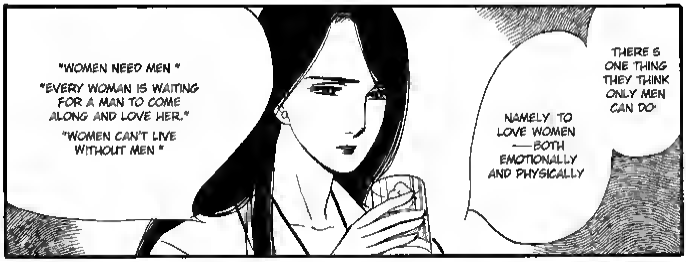
EVER SINCE WE FIRST MET AT OUR MIAI... I'VE THOUGHT YOU WERE A GOOD PERSON
YOU'VE ALWAYS BEEN SO BRIGHT AND CHEERFUL...
AND SMART
I MIGHT NOT HAVE FALLEN IN LOVE WITH YOU
BUT I'VE ALWAYS RESPECTED YOU...
AND NOW YOU'RE BEING SO...
I'M SORRY...
BUT I LOVE KAORU.
IT'S STRANGE FOR ONE WOMAN TO FALL IN LOVE WITH ANOTHER, ISN'T IT? SO...
I WAS RUNNING AWAY FROM THE IDEA I TRIED TO PRETEND I DIDN'T KNOW THAT WORLD EXISTED

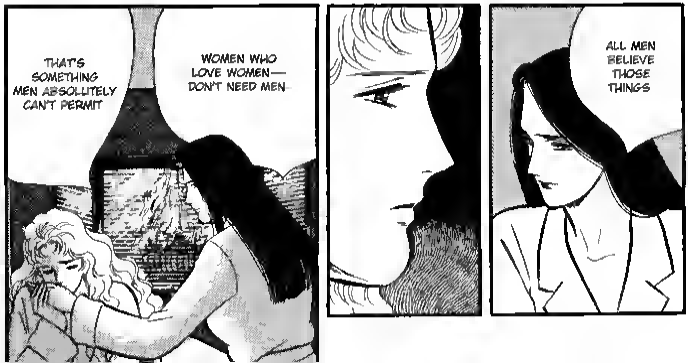
I'M SORRY PLEASE FORGIVE ME...
NOT NOW THAT I REALLY KNOW ABOUT MY FEELINGS FOR KAORU
BUT I CAN'T DO THAT ANYMORE
click
SAHOKO!

Farewell...
I'm sorry
YEAH
...ARE YOU OKAY?
YEAH
LET'S GO HOME
I fell in love with her at first sight
It was three years ago... at our mia
I thought we could become a family.....
I wanted to make her happy, and I wanted her to make me happy——
It wasn't
respect that I wanted——


I'M ALL RIGHT NOW
HE HIT YOU!
THAT MONSTER!
IT HURTS... HE FORCED ME...
AND HERE?
I'M BACK HERE WITH YOU NOW, KAORU...
THAT'S DESPICABLE!
—THE REASON THAT MANY MEN
HAVE SUCH A PROBLEM WITH LESBIANS IS THAT THEY THINK WE'RE ENCROACHING ON THEIR TERRITORY AND USING SPECIAL PRIVILEGES THAT SHOULD BE ACCORDED ONLY TO THEM.
THEY WANT TO HAVE COMPLETE POSSESSION OF WOMEN— IN TERMS OF BOTH SOCIETY IN GENERAL AND THEIR OWN PRIVATE RELATIONSHIPS...
THEY THINK THEY SHOULD GET FIRST PRIORITY OVER WOMEN

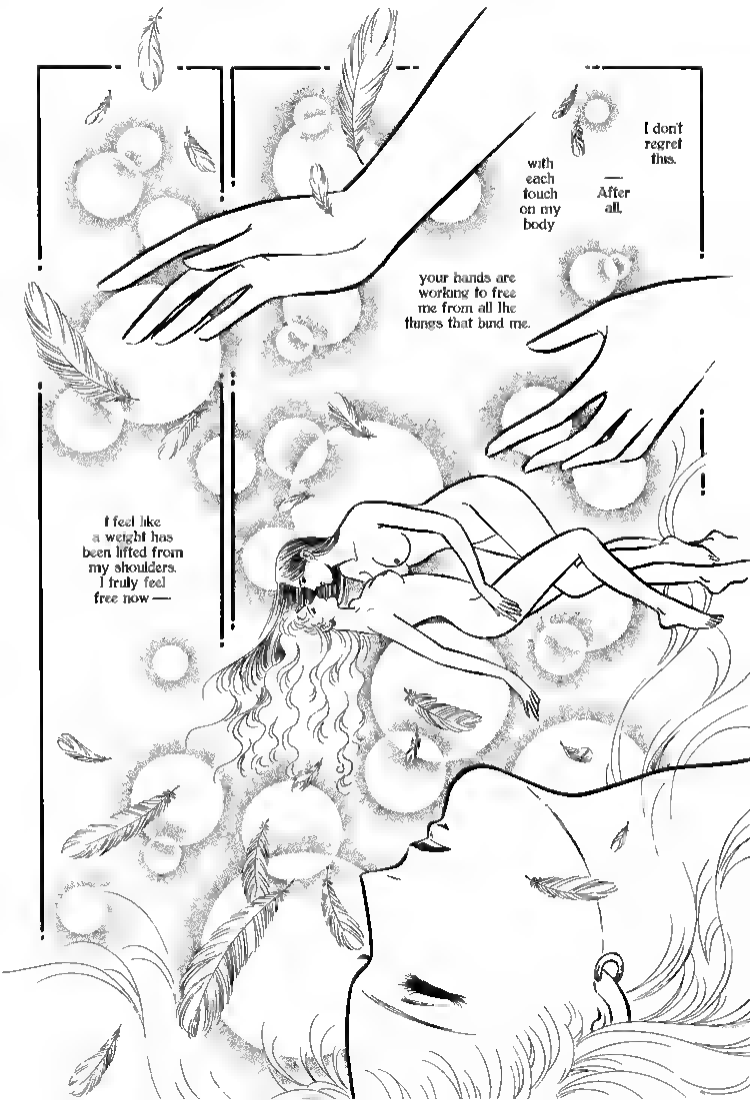

MEN— ESPECIALLY THOSE WITHOUT TALENT— AREN'T EXACTLY THRILLED ABOUT THAT
AND
AND ENTERED WORLDS THAT USED TO BELONG EXCLUSIVELY TO MEN.
BUSINESS, SOCIETY, CULTURE— WOMEN HAVE MADE AMAZING STRIDES IN ANY NUMBER OF FIELDS,
THESE DAYS, THERE ISN'T MUCH A MAN CAN DO THAT A WOMAN CAN'T
TO MEN, "GENDER"— IS LIKE THEIR FINAL STRONGHOLD


"WOMEN NEED MEN."
"EVERY WOMAN IS WAITING FOR A MAN TO COME ALONG AND LOVE HER."
"WOMEN CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT MEN."
NAMELY TO LOVE WOMEN —BOTH EMOTIONALLY AND PHYSICALLY
THERE'S ONE THING THEY THINK ONLY MEN CAN DO.

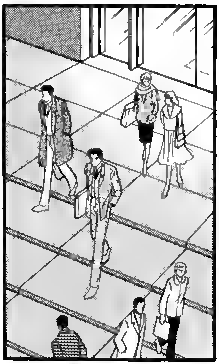

THAT'S SOMETHING MEN ABSOLUTELY CAN'T PERMIT
WOMEN WHO LOVE WOMEN— DON'T NEED MEN.
ALL MEN BELIEVE THOSE THINGS

I DON'T KNOW—— WHETHER MY DRAGGING YOU INTO THIS WORLD WITH ME WAS REALLY FOR THE BEST
WHY WOULDN'T IT BE?
THIS ISN'T CALIFORNIA
IN JAPAN, YOU CAN'T JUST COME OUT TO EVERYONE AND LIVE FREELY
YOU HAVE TO FIGHT AGAINST OPPRESSION FROM BOTH THE INSIDE AND THE OUTSIDE——
YOU'RE RIGHT
BUT

THIS IS THE FIRST TIME IN MY LIFE THAT I'VE CHOSEN MY OWN PATH
I DID JUST AS MY PARENTS TOLD ME
WHEN IT CAME TO MY SCHOOLING MY JOB AND EVEN MY MARRIAGE BUT NOT THIS ——
AH


I don't regret this.
— After all,
with each touch on my body
your hands are working to free me from all the things that bind me.
I feel like a weight has been lifted from my shoulders. I truly feel free now —

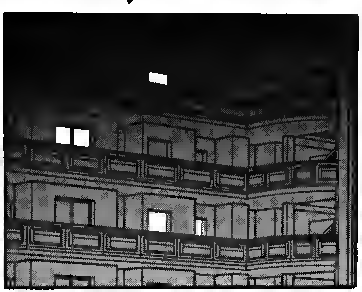
HM?
ARE YOU FEELING ILL?
IS SOMETHING THE MATTER, KANOU-SAN?

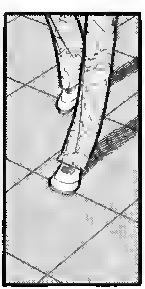


UNDER THE WEATHER. HUH?
GEE.

N-... NO NOT PARTICULARLY DO I LOOK ILL?
YES
YOU'VE BEEN LOOKING UNDER THE WEATHER FOR QUITE A WHILE NOW.

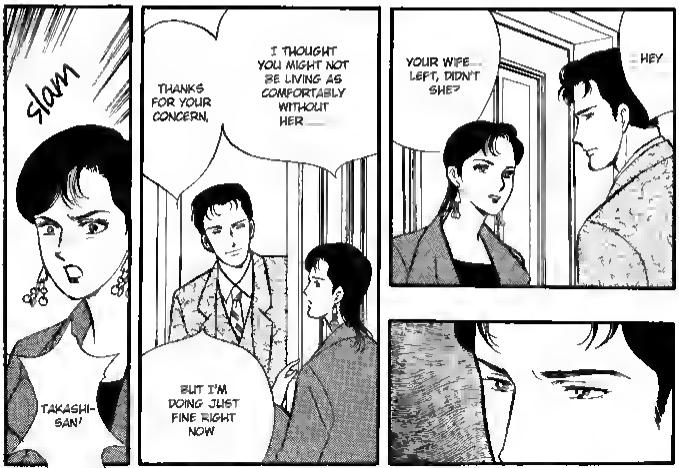
K-chnk K-chnk

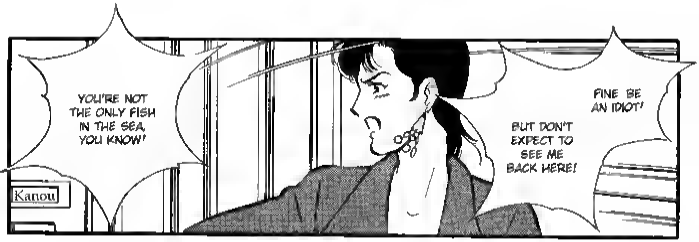


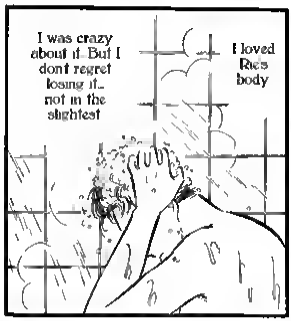


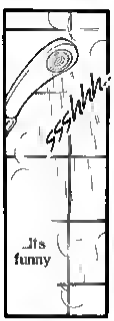
Going home to a cold room— a dark, empty room... is a lonely thing

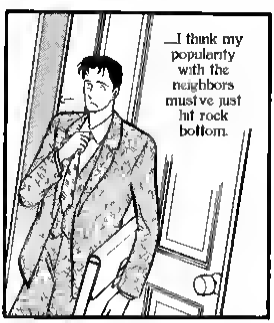
TAKASHI-SAN


slam
TAKASHI-SAN!
THANKS FOR YOUR CONCERN,
I THOUGHT YOU MIGHT NOT BE LIVING AS COMFORTABLY WITHOUT HER——
BUT I'M DOING JUST FINE RIGHT NOW
YOUR WIFE—— LEFT, DIDN'T SHE?
HEY

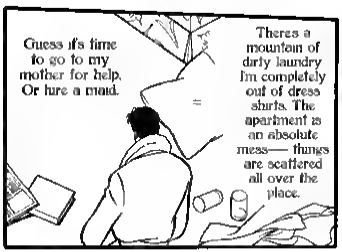

YOU'RE NOT THE ONLY FISH IN THE SEA, YOU KNOW!
Kanou
FINE. BE AN IDIOT!
BUT DON'T EXPECT TO SEE ME BACK HERE!


I was crazy about it. But I don't regret losing it... not in the slightest
I loved Rie's body

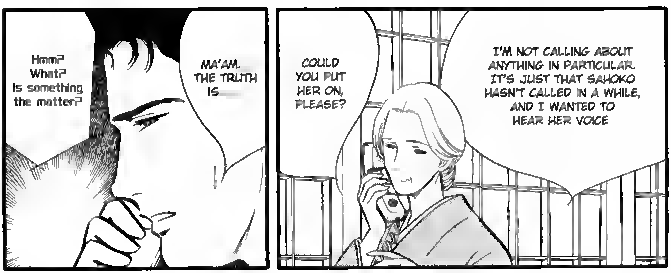

sssshhh
...It's funny


...I think my popularity with the neighbors must've just hit rock bottom.

Right... I'm all out of clean towels.
Oh


I guess it's time to go to my mother for help. Or hire a maid.
There's a mountain of dirty laundry. I'm completely out of dress shirts. The apartment is an absolute mess— things are scattered all over the place.

but this room belongs to *you* Sahoko.
I'm sure Rie would have been all too happy to play the helpful housewife....
but...
I don't want to let another woman touch it....
KANOU SPEAKING
Oh, I haven't spoken to you in quite a while Takeshi-san!
MOTHER ?!
R R R R
start


Hmm? What? Is something the matter?
MA'AM, THE TRUTH IS....
COULD YOU PUT HER ON, PLEASE?
I'M NOT CALLING ABOUT ANYTHING IN PARTICULAR. IT'S JUST THAT SAHOKO HASN'T CALLED IN A WHILE, AND I WANTED TO HEAR HER VOICE

YOUR MOTHER HAS TAKEN TO HER BED AGAIN
I'M TOLD THAT IT'S BECAUSE—— OF KANOU-KUN'S AFFAIR.
DAD——
I KNOW IT WILL BE DIFFICULT FOR YOU BUT YOU NEED TO FORGIVE HIM
IT'S ONLY NATURAL—— FOR A MAN TO HAVE AN AFFAIR OR TWO AT ONE POINT OR ANOTHER IN HIS LIFE
I'M SORRY, DAD——!
HE SEEMS TO TRULY REGRET HIS ACTIONS.

YES, I KNOW THAT.
YOUR MOTHER AND I DIDN'T RAISE YOU TO BE THE SORT OF SHAMELESS HUSSY WHO'D GET A DIVORCE!
I'M SORRY...!
SAHOKO!
I JUST CAN'T GO BACK.
I can't go back to being a man's slave. I just can't!—
PLEASE DON'T SAY THAT, DAD. IT'S BAD LUCK.
AND I'LL BE ALL RIGHT. I'LL BE WORKING.
WE'RE WILLING TO LET YOU COME BACK HOME, BUT YOUR MOTHER AND I WON'T BE ALIVE FOREVER!
WELL?! HOW ARE YOU GOING TO SUPPORT YOURSELF?!
YOU'LL BE A SINGLE WOMAN AGAIN.
SO— WHAT DO YOU PLAN TO DO AFTER THE DIVORCE, THEN?

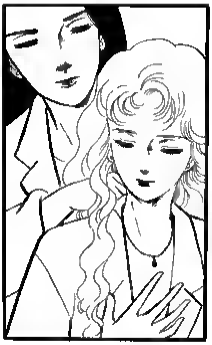
I'VE LIKED IT—
AND WANTED TO TRY IT—FOR A LONG TIME NOW
BEAUTIFUL THINGS CUTE THINGS
YOU KNOW, MAKING ACCESS-ORIES AND OTHER LITTLE THINGS—
METAL-SMITHING ?!
RIGHT NOW I'M WORKING AT KAORU'S SHOP
AND GOING TO METAL-SMITHING SCHOOL
BUT I'M SICK OF DOING A JOB I DON'T LIKE I DON'T WANT TO DO THAT ANYMORE
YOU'RE GOING TO SAY THAT'S NOT WOMEN'S WORK, AREN'T YOU?
KAORU SAYS YOU CAN DO ANYTHING IN FIVE YEARS IF YOU TRY HARD ENOUGH
SAHOKO YOU'VE CHAN-GED
I WANT TO BE ABLE TO TELL PEOPLE, "THIS IS MY JOB."
I MAY NOT BE MAKING MUCH MONEY RIGHT NOW
BUT I KNOW I WILL BE SOME-DAY

YOU'RE WELCOME
THAN THAT A WOMAN STOLE MY WIFE AWAY.
BETTER TO SAY MY WIFE GOT ANGRY AND LEFT BECAUSE I HAD AN AFFAIR
FOR NOT TELLING MY PARENTS ABOUT US
UM...
THANKS
MY FATHER CAME TO SEE ME TODAY
ALL I NEED TO DO IS PUT MY SEAL ON THEM
YES, THEY HAVE
Have they gotten there yet?
...I sent you the divorce papers.....
It doesn't really affect us at all
...But you won't be able to remarry unless you send it in, Dear
BUT
I MIGHT NEVER SEND THEM IN.
Application For Divorce

I'm sure you'll meet a wonderful woman.
And you'll want to marry her... I just know it.
but I want us to be on equal footing someday
BUT YOU'LL... FALL IN LOVE WITH ANOTHER WOMAN SOMEDAY
SAME-SEX MARRIAGE ISN'T RECOGNIZED UNDER JAPANESE LAW
You can wait until then... to file the divorce papers.
Men can remarry immediately after divorce— they don't have to wait six months the way women do
...I'll be waiting for you to file them
I'll never sell myself into slavery again.
I may be depending on Kaoru for everything right now
so we can love each other as equals.....

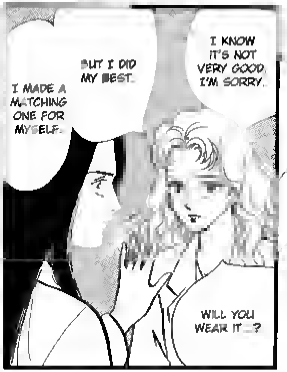
MERRY CHRISTMAS!
MERRY CHRISTMAS!
NICE TO MEET YOU, DEAR! MMMMM!
WHAT A CHARMING YOUNG WOMAN!
OOH! KAORU! LONG TIME NO SEE!
OH, MY, AND THIS IS YOUR GIRLFRIEND?
WE'VE HEARD ALL ABOUT HER!
THERE ARE SOME STRAIGHT PEOPLE HERE TOO
HEY KAORU, IS EVERYONE HERE GAY?
HI, KAORU!
HI!
PEOPLE WHO'VE STUCK BY THEIR GAY FRIENDS...

I LIKE HAVING PLACES TO GO WHERE I DON'T HAVE TO HIDE THE FACT THAT I'M A LESBIAN
IT'S NICE ISN'T IT?
THIS PLACE IS INTER-ESTING
MEN WITH MEN MEN WITH WOMEN WOMEN WITH WOMEN
THERE ARE THREE KINDS OF COUPLES HERE
HEHE YOU'RE RIGHT
IT WOULD BE NICE IF THE WORLD OUTSIDE WERE LIKE THAT TOO IF ALL THREE KINDS OF COUPLES WERE SEEN AS NORMAL
YOU'RE RIGHT MAYBE SOME-DAY
I LOVE YOU, PRINCESS SAHO

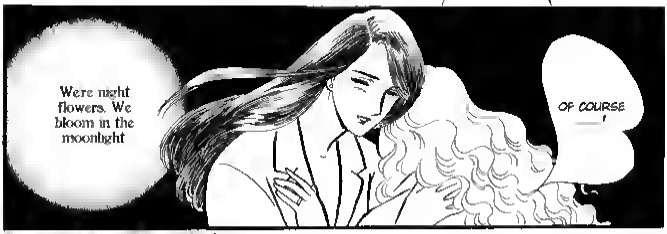


WOULD YOU PUT IT ON ME?
IT'S LOVELY...

MERRY CHRIST-MAS


I MADE A MATCHING ONE FOR MYSELF.
BUT I DID MY BEST.
I KNOW IT'S NOT VERY GOOD. I'M SORRY.
WILL YOU WEAR IT...?

HERE'S MY PRESENT TO YOU.


We're night flowers. We bloom in the moonlight
OF COURSE ——!

We can't bloom in the daytime, under the light of the sun.
But when morning comes, we keep our dreams clasped fast to us.
If I'm with you, I can keep on living—
Kisa Kusakabe
Yasuyuki Sakamoto
End of Chapter 3

In the window of a certain gallery in the Ginza district of Tokyo, there is a single painting displayed.

Portrait of Kayako.

Every time I come to the Ginza district, I go there and gaze at it

It's because the woman in the portrait is someone I could never forget —

Midnight Flowers

Part 2

FNGH!
OH, SORRY WAS I HEAVY?
GET OFF ME.
NO I'M GOING TO BE SICK!
IF YOU'RE TAKING A SHOWER, I'LL JOIN YOU.
BLEEEGH!
LNGH
slam
HUH ?

pant pant
pant
HEY YOU OKAY IN THERE?
UH UH
GNH
KAORU-SAN
KAORU? YOU HAD TOO MUCH TO DRINK, HUH?
USHH
YOU DIDN'T HAVE TO LOCK THE DOOR.
I'M GOING HOME
WHAT?!
K-CHK

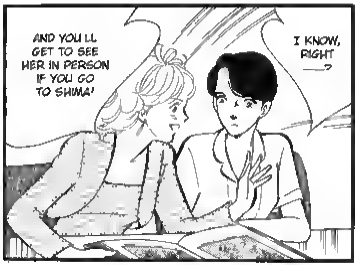
IT'S LATE STAY OVER. IT'S NOT LIKE THERE'S ANYONE WAITING FOR YOU AT HOME RIGHT?
C'MON, KAORU
FRIDAY
...THAT'S KAORI-SAN! DON'T BE SO FAMILIAR!
UM. DID I DO SOMETHING TO UPSET YOU...?
OH! WAIT!
I'LL SEE YOU HOME
NO NEED I'M TAKING A TAXI
GOOD NIGHT
'NIGHT
Thud
...I just went to bed with a girl

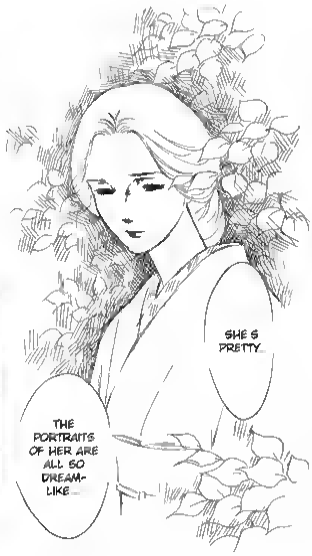
Oh ugh
Ugh..I feel awful——!
Ugh
Geez..
who threw up, yelled at me, and then rushed off afterwards.
—That's never happened to me before.
That was the only way I could get myself to sleep with a man.
I got totally plastered... drank until alcohol was practically oozing from my pores
as I was desperately trying to cope with the pain.
...And during it
all I could think was, Please, please, let this be over soon...

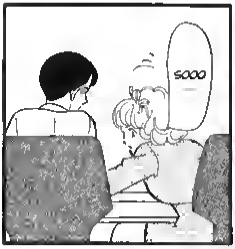
My heart was broken over something like *that*?
FNH
what sex is like—
So that's
I wish I were dead.—
HEY, ISHII, DO YOU KNOW IF KUNO-SAN LIKES ANYONE?
WHA-AAT?
YES AND NO
THINGS NOT GO YOUR WAY LAST NIGHT?
MM-M
HEY, WHY THE LONG FACE NAKAYAMA?

WELL, KIND OF...
SHE AGREED TO COME TO YOUR DAD'S PLACE IN SHIMA DURING SUMMER BREAK, DIDN'T SHE?
NO WAY... ERIKA WOULDN'T HAVE INTRODUCED YOU TWO IF KUNO-SAN ALREADY HAD SOMEONE ELSE
NO, SHE WOULDN'T HAVE TO BE DATING HIM— IT COULD BE UNREQUITED OR SOMETHING
HM-M.
GEEZ, WHEN DID YOU TURN INTO SUCH A COWARD?
I'VE EVER KNOWN
SHE'S COMPLETELY DIFFERENT FROM ANY OF THE GIRLS
SHE'S DIFFERENT
TO THE LIBRARY! C'MON, HURRY!
WHAT? WHAT IS IT, ERIKA?
KAORU!
HEY. COME WITH ME, KAORU!

QUIET DOWN RIGHT?
OH... UH,
LOOK AT THIS!
A BOOK OF TOMIOKA NARUYOSHI'S PAINTINGS!
IT'S A REAL SHOCKER THAT HE'S NAKAYAMA-SAN'S DAD ISN'T IT?
IS TOMIOKA HIS PEN NAME?
IT SAYS HERE THAT IT'S HIS REAL NAME
HEY LOOK.
OH...
THEY HAVE DIFFERENT NAMES BECAUSE NAKAYAMA-KUN'S NAME WAS PUT ON HIS MOTHER'S FAMILY REGISTER AFTER HIS PARENTS GOT DIVORCED RIGHT?
THIS WOMAN WAS THE ONE RESPONSIBLE FOR THEIR DIVORCE.
SHE'S MARRIED TO TOMIOKA NARUYOSHI NOW.


AND YOU'LL GET TO SEE HER IN PERSON IF YOU GO TO SHIMA!
I KNOW, RIGHT—?

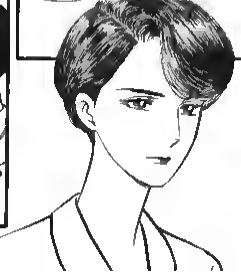

SHE'S PRETTY...
THE PORTRAITS OF HER ARE ALL SO DREAM-LIKE...


SOOO

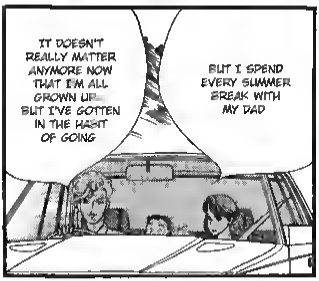
glare

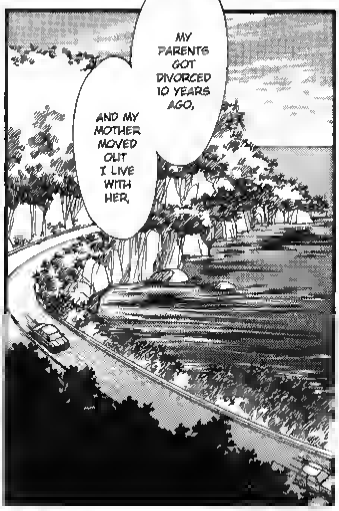
I'LL GO
YES!

C'MOOON, LET'S GO TO SHIMA! PLEASE? IF YOU DON'T GO, KAORU KAZUYA AND I WON'T HAVE MUCH CHANCE OF GOING
YOU'RE THE ONE NAKAYAMA-KUN'S INTERESTED IN, AFTER ALL
I'VE NEVER MET A REAL PAINTER BEFORE
I CAN'T WAIT TO GO



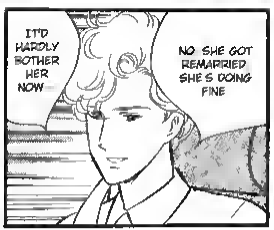
SPLASH

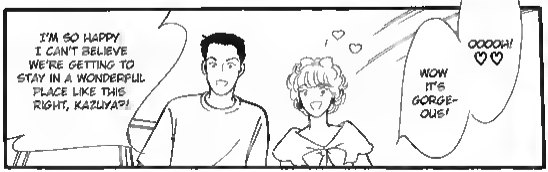

IT DOESN'T REALLY MATTER ANYMORE NOW THAT I'M ALL GROWN UP... BUT I'VE GOTTEN IN THE HABIT OF GOING
BUT I SPEND EVERY SUMMER BREAK WITH MY DAD

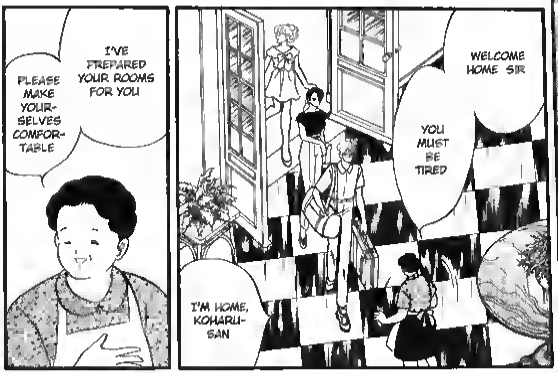

MY PARENTS GOT DIVORCED 10 YEARS AGO,
AND MY MOTHER MOVED OUT I LIVE WITH HER,

BOTHER YOUR MOTHER?
AND IT DOESN'T
HUH?

OH


IT'D HARDLY BOTHER HER NOW
NO SHE GOT REMARRIED SHE'S DOING FINE

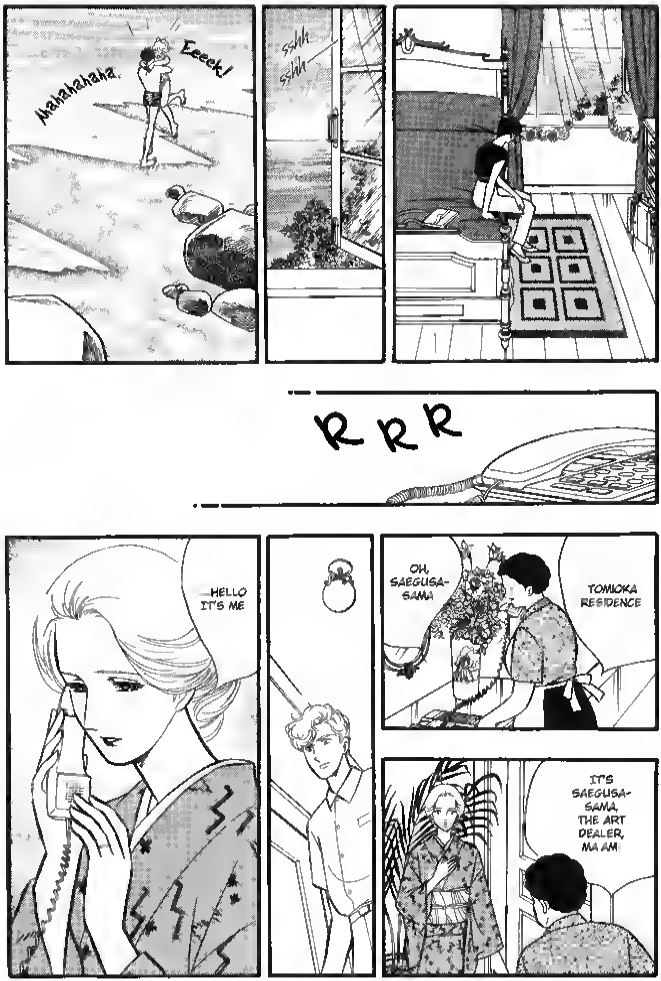

I'M SO HAPPY I CAN'T BELIEVE WE'RE GETTING TO STAY IN A WONDERFUL PLACE LIKE THIS RIGHT, KAZUYA?!
WOW IT'S GORGE-OUS!
OOOOH! ♡♡


I'VE PREPARED YOUR ROOMS FOR YOU
PLEASE MAKE YOUR-SELVES COMFOR-TABLE
WELCOME HOME SIR
YOU MUST BE TIRED
I'M HOME, KOHARU-SAN

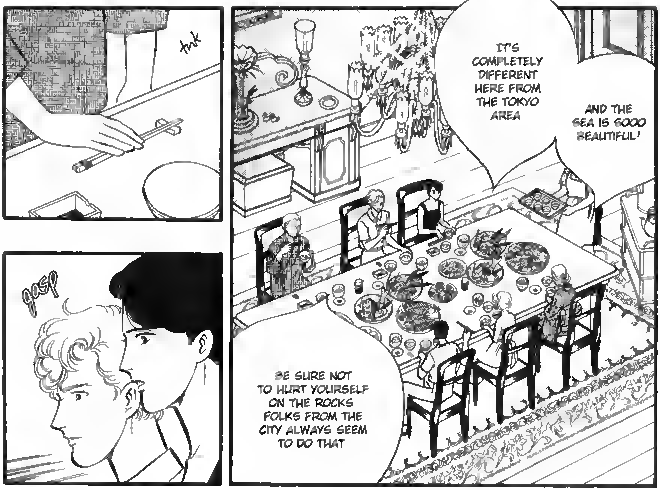
WELCOME HOME YASUYUKI-SAN
OH, KOHARU-SAN, THE TWO OF US WILL SHARE A ROOM.
OH, MY
IS THAT SO?
AND WELCOME, ALL OF YOU
THANK YOU FOR COMING ALL THIS WAY
PLEASE MAKE YOURSELVES COMFORTABLE, AND HAVE A GOOD TIME
Wow! She's beautiful!

WOW! YOU CAN SEE THE SEA FROM HERE
I GUESS THE VIEW'S THE ONLY GOOD THING ABOUT IT
I'M HOME KAYAKO-SAN
YOU MUST BE TIRED YOU SHOULD TAKE A SHOWER AND THEN GET SOME REST
THE BATHROOM'S AT THE END OF THE HALL
WELL, YOU'RE CERTAINLY FULL OF ENERGY
HEY, WANNA GO DOWN AND HAVE A SWIM?
HIYA, NEIGHBOR!
SO IT'S NO WONDER THEY HAVE ENERGY NOW...
THEY BOTH SLEPT THROUGH THE DRIVE,
WE'LL BE BACK!
Heyaa!

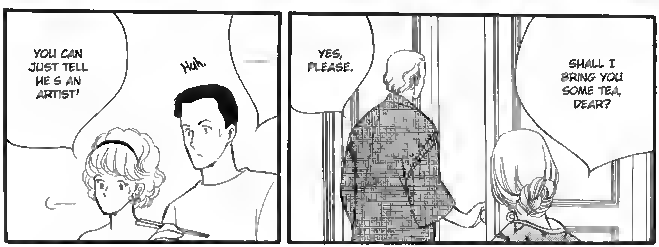
I WASN'T SURE YOU'D COME.
I'M GLAD YOU DID
DON'T WORRY ABOUT HIM. HE'S ALWAYS IN HIS STUDIO
AND HE DOESN'T LIKE TO BE DISTURBED
WE HAVEN'T SAID HELLO TO YOUR FATHER YET.
Thud
I'LL WAKE YOU UP WHEN IT'S TIME FOR DINNER.
I'D LIKE TO GO TAKE A SHOWER AND THEN LIE DOWN
MM
I'M SORRY... I'M TIRED


Ahahahaha
Eeeek!
SSHH
SSHH
RRR
—HELLO IT'S ME
OH, SAEGUSA-SAMA
TOMIOKA RESIDENCE
IT'S SAEGUSA-SAMA, THE ART DEALER, MA AM!

click...
THE MISSUS HAS A WEAK CONSTITUTION,
SO SHE CANNOT GO OUT AND ENJOY HERSELF
A VISIT FROM SAEGUSA-SAMA MAY BE GOOD ENTERTAINMENT FOR HER
YES, SHE IS.
HEY, KOHARU-SAN SAEGUSA-SAN, THE ART DEALER, IS A WOMAN, RIGHT?
she looks so happy to talk to her
If it were a man, I'd think she was having an affair—
IT'S DELICIOUS!
OHHH, WOW!
LOOK AT ALL THAT SEAFOOD!


tink
IT'S COMPLETELY DIFFERENT HERE FROM THE TOKYO AREA
AND THE SEA IS GOOD BEAUTIFUL!
gasp
BE SURE NOT TO HURT YOURSELF ON THE ROCKS FOLKS FROM THE CITY ALWAYS SEEM TO DO THAT

SO I'LL BE EXCUSING MYSELF NOW...
I'M A BIT PREOCCUPIED WITH ONE OF MY UNFINISHED PAINTINGS,
OH, PLEASE DON'T RUSH YOURSELVES ON MY ACCOUNT— CONTINUE TO ENJOY YOUR MEAL. HAVE PLENTY

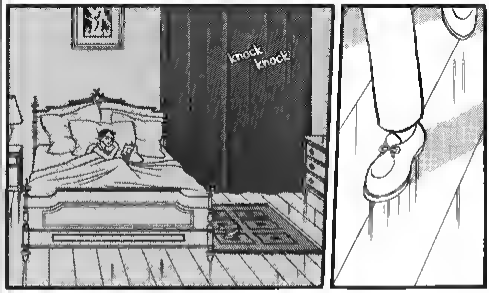

YOU CAN JUST TELL ME S AN ARTIST!
Hum.
YES, PLEASE.
SHALL I BRING YOU SOME TEA, DEAR?

DEAR,
IT SEEMS SAEGUSA-SAN WILL BE COMING FOR A VISIT TOMORROW
HMPH SHE'S PROBABLY COMING TO GIVE ME A KICK IN THE PANTS,
SINCE I HAVEN'T MADE ANY PROGRESS ON THE EXHIBITION
YOU GO TO BED KAYAKO
I'M GOING TO STAY UP AND FINISH THIS
YES, DEAR
[...]

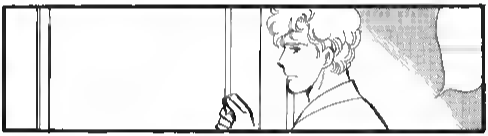
MA'AM?
K-chk
ARE YOU CERTAIN YOU DON'T WISH ME TO FETCH ANYONE FOR YOU?
I'VE TAKEN MEDICINE
I'LL BE FINE
IT WILL PASS SOON...

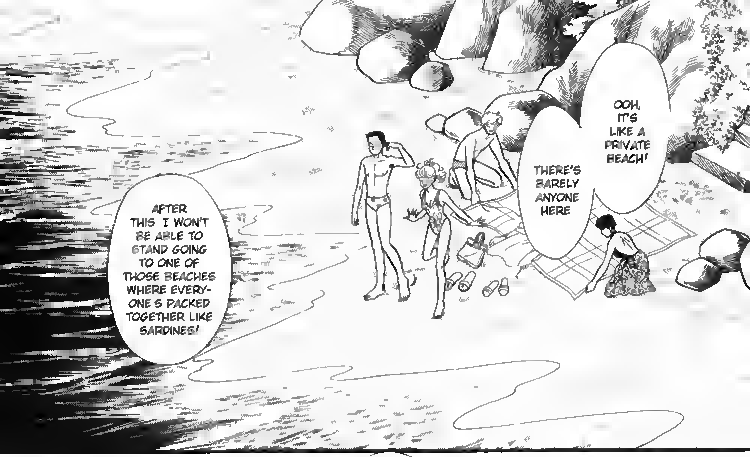
I'M SORRY TO CAUSE YOU WORRY...
YOU NEEDN'T STAY WITH ME
I'M FINE NOW...
ALL RIGHT...
GOOD NIGHT...
shudder
Like my mothers.—
She has a beautiful face, but it was as white as a sheet
A beauty best suited to slumber in a coffin, surrounded by white flowers.—

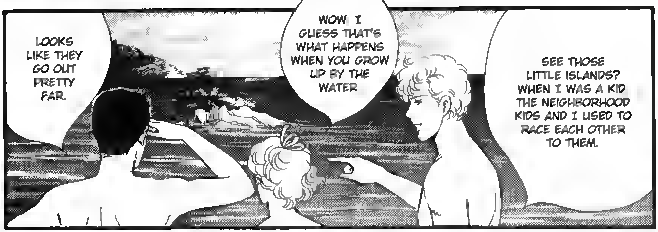
sshh
sshh—

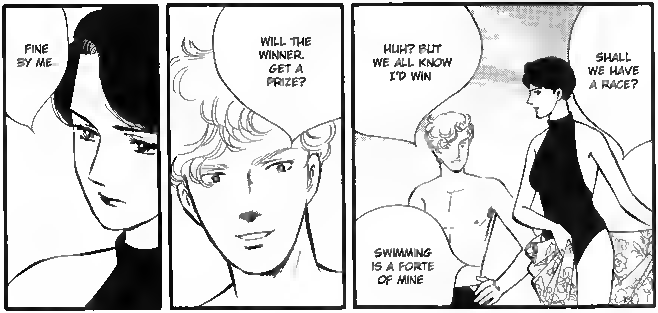

knock
knock

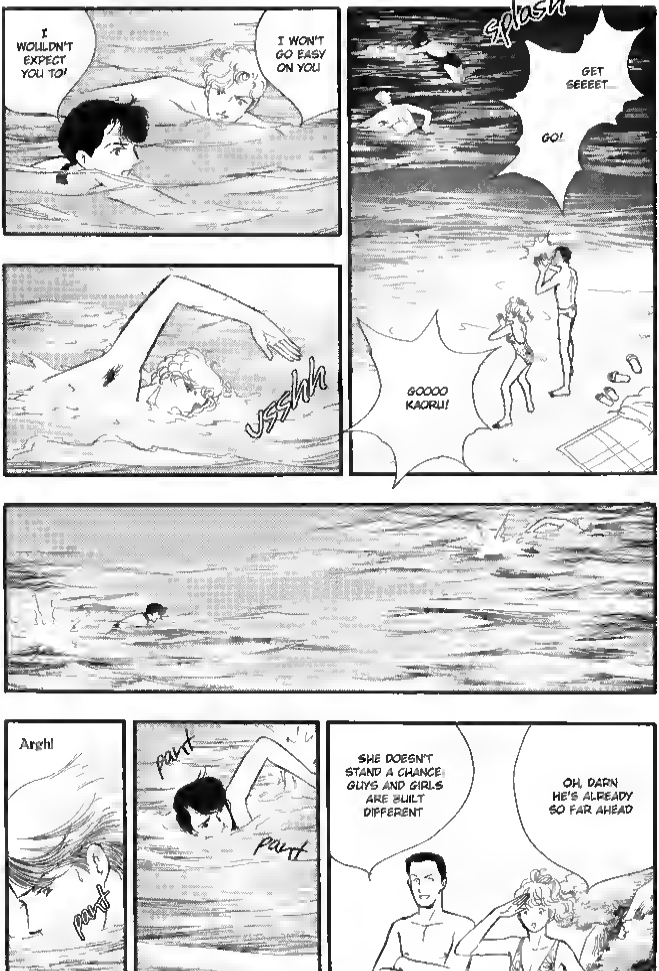
knock
knock...



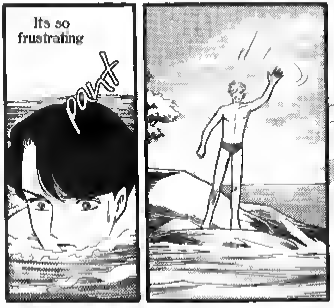

AFTER THIS I WON'T BE ABLE TO STAND GOING TO ONE OF THOSE BEACHES WHERE EVERY-ONE'S PACKED TOGETHER LIKE SARDINES!
THERE'S BARELY ANYONE HERE
OOH, IT'S LIKE A PRIVATE BEACH!

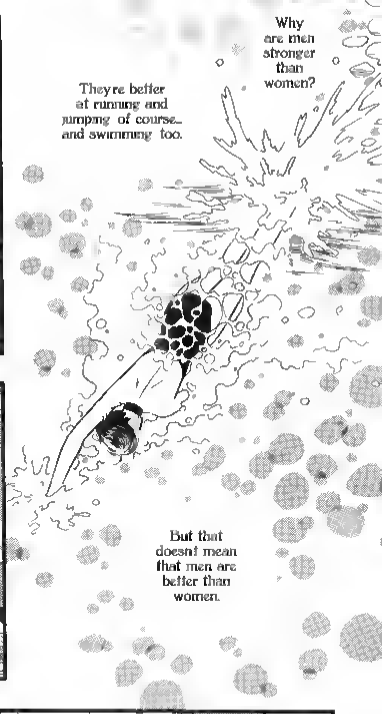

LOOKS LIKE THEY GO OUT PRETTY FAR.
WOW. I GUESS THAT'S WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU GROW UP BY THE WATER.
SEE THOSE LITTLE ISLANDS? WHEN I WAS A KID THE NEIGHBORHOOD KIDS AND I USED TO RACE EACH OTHER TO THEM.

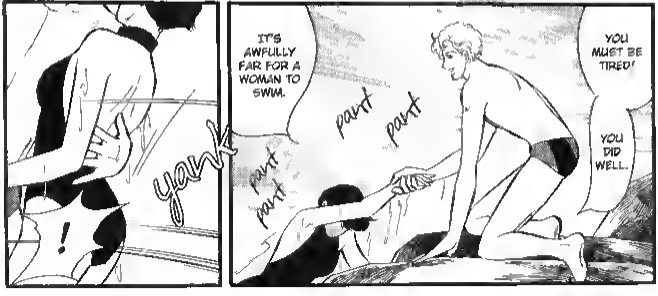

FINE BY ME.
WILL THE WINNER GET A PRIZE?
HUH? BUT WE ALL KNOW I'D WIN
SHALL WE HAVE A RACE?
SWIMMING IS A FORTE OF MINE


I WOULDN'T EXPECT YOU TO!
I WON'T GO EASY ON YOU!
splash
GET SEEEET
GO!
GOOOO KAORU!
JSSHh
Argh!
pant
pant
pant
SHE DOESN'T STAND A CHANCE. GUYS AND GIRLS ARE BUILT DIFFERENT
OH, DARN HE'S ALREADY SO FAR AHEAD

so we've always just ended up as prizes in mens competitions with each other
Competing is mens work.
Theres nothing women can beat men at
pant
pant

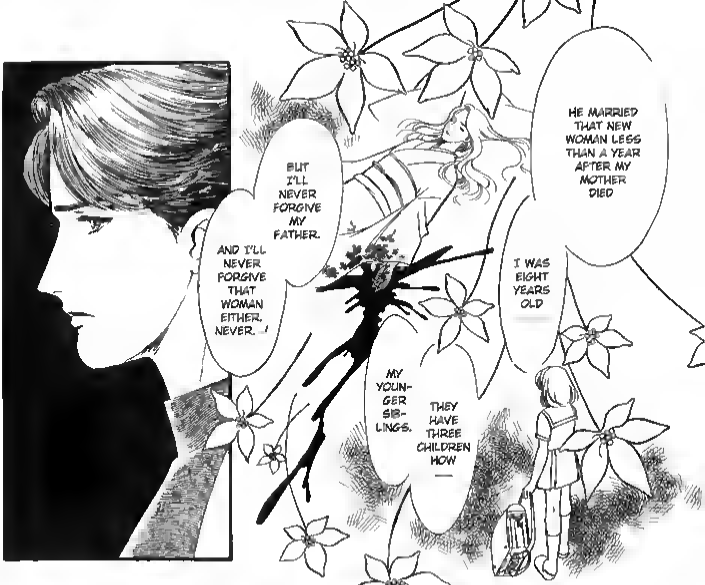

Its so frustrating
pant


Why are men stronger than women?
They're better at running and jumping of course... and swimming too.
But that doesn't mean that men are better than women.


yank
!
IT'S AWFULLY FAR FOR A WOMAN TO SWIM.
pant
pant
pant
pant
YOU MUST BE TIRED!
YOU DID WELL.

YOU DON'T MIND ME TAKING IT, RIGHT?
NOW FOR MY PRIZE
...ALL RIGHT.
YOU CAN DO WHATEVER YOU WANT.
IT'S NOT LIKE A WOMAN COULD EVER BEAT A MAN, AFTER ALL....
WHAT ...?
WHY WOULD YOU SAY THAT?

Y'KNOW USUALLY
Y-
I'M SORRY
YOU'RE RIGHT
I DON'T REMEMBER DOING ANYTHING TO DESERVE BEING SPOKEN TO LIKE THAT!
DID I PUSH YOU INTO IT?
WELL, DID I?
IT'S LIKE IT DROVE YOU FARTHER AWAY
BUT WITH YOU...
WHEN A GUY AND A GIRL SLEEP TOGETHER, THAT MAKES THEM CLOSER.
MY MOTHER SLIT HER WRISTS —
WHEN MY FATHER TOOK A LOVER,
MY MOTHER KILLED HERSELF


HE MARRIED THAT NEW WOMAN LESS THAN A YEAR AFTER MY MOTHER DIED
I WAS EIGHT YEARS OLD
BUT I'LL NEVER FORGIVE MY FATHER.
AND I'LL NEVER FORGIVE THAT WOMAN EITHER. NEVER.
MY YOUNGER SIBLINGS.
THEY HAVE THREE CHILDREN NOW

I CAN'T BELIEVE IN THE LOVE BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN
...SO MAYBE

HOW CAN YOU STAND TO COME AND STAY HERE WITH YOUR FATHER AND THE WOMAN HE DUMPED YOUR MOTHER FOR?
IT DOESN'T BOTHER YOU?
YOUR PARENTS ARE DIVORCED TOO

ARE YOU CALLING ME A CHILD?!
YES I AM
BUT CHILDREN GROW UP. AND ONCE THEY'VE GROWN UP... THEY'RE ABLE TO UNDERSTAND THAT THEY WEREN'T THE ONLY ONES WHO WERE IN PAIN— THEIR PARENTS WERE TOO.
AND ONCE THEY UNDERSTAND THAT, THEY CAN FORGIVE THEM
THERE'S NOT A CHILD OUT THERE WHO ISN'T HURT WHEN HIS PARENTS GET DIVORCED
YOU'RE STILL THAT LITTLE GIRL WHO GOT HURT
KAORU,
I LOVE YOU
PLEASE BELIEVE ME

PLEASE, OPEN YOUR HEART.
I WON'T BETRAY YOU, I SWEAR.
IT'S KAORU-SAN!
SORRY
KAORU-SAN
LET ME IN, KAORU-SAN
THEY'RE OFF IN THEIR OWN LITTLE WORLD.
I JUST HOPE THINGS WORK OUT FOR THEM
THEY'RE SURE TAKIN' THEIR SWEET TIME!

WELCOME, SAEGUSA-SAMA.
screech
BUT I COULDN'T TELL YOU WHETHER HE'S MADE ANY PROGRESS
Hahaha.
THAT'S THE PROBLEM, ISN'T IT?
IT'S BEEN A WHILE, KOHARU-SAN
HAS THE VIRTUOSO* BEEN PAINTING?
HE HARDLY EVER LEAVES HIS STUDIO THESE DAYS,
* SENSEI: A RESPECTFUL TITLE USED FOR ARTISTS, PARTICULARLY GREAT ONES.
I'LL TAKE YOUR THINGS TO YOUR ROOM
KAYAKO-SAN!
WELCOME, KYOUKO-SAN

REALLY?
I'M FEELING PARTICULARLY WELL TODAY
YOU'RE LOOKING AS BEAUTIFUL AS EVER.
HOW IS YOUR HEALTH?
I'M FINE I'VE BEEN TAKING MY MEDICATION.
THANKS TO YOUR PRESENCE HERE
BOOOY WE SWAM FOR AGES!
I'M STARVING!
YOU JUST ATE A FEW MINUTES AGO!

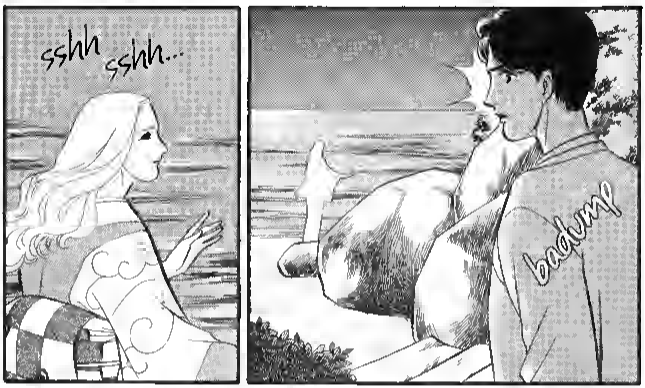
YOU THINK I CAN CREATE MORE JUST BECAUSE I HAVE AN EXHIBITION COMING UP?
IF I CAN'T PAINT, I CAN'T PAINT.
IF YOU LEFT ME ALONE, I COULD GET MORE WORK DONE
PLEASE DON'T SAY THAT, SENSEI
THEY'RE WONDERFUL, SENSEI!
BUT THERE DON'T SEEM TO BE ANY NEW PAINTINGS SINCE THE LAST TIME I CAME DO THERE?
IN THIS CASE, A RESPECTFUL ADDRESS FOR A RENOWNED ARTIST
TELL KAYAKO THAT I'LL BE EATING IN HERE PLEASE
AS YOU WISH, GAHAKU
I WON'T DISTURB YOU FURTHER.
IN-DEED
...I SEE GAHAKU HASN'T CHANGED A BIT

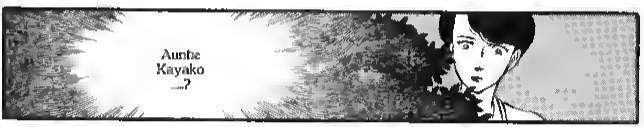
sshh~
OH, MY A GALLERY IN THE GINZA DISTRICT?
MY FATHER WAS THE ONE WHO OPENED IT
BUT I TOOK OVER AFTER HIS PASSING...
A WOMAN RUNNING A GALLERY... HOW WONDERFUL!
OH, SO WHAT DOES YOUR HUSBAND DO, THEN?
NO WAAAY!
SAEGUSA-SAN IS UNMARRIED.
I CAN'T BELIEVE IT SHE'S SO BEAUTIFUL!
OH, I SEE ARE YOU DIVORCED, THEN?
NO I'VE BEEN SINGLE ALL THIS TIME.

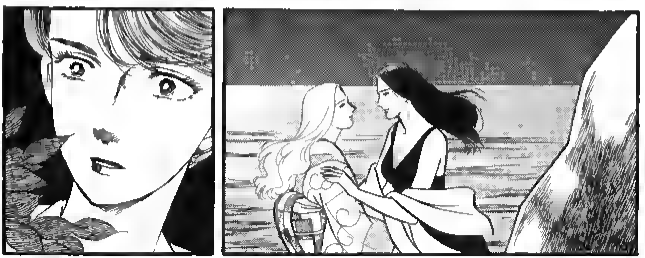
WELL, I'M NOT AS POPULAR AS YOU SEEM TO THINK
MIGHT I ASK WHY YOU NEVER MARRIED?
THERE MUST HAVE BEEN COUNTLESS MEN WHO PROPOSED HM?
I'VE HAD LOVERS
IN FACT I HAVE ONE NOW
BUT AS FOR MARRIAGE
YES, LET'S GO WITH THAT REASON
BECAUSE YOU'RE BUSY WITH WORK?
KAORU-SAN
YOU WON'T GIVE ME A STRAIGHT ANSWER BECAUSE YOU SEE ME AS A CHILD, HUH?
EVERYONE HAS THEIR OWN PARTICULAR CIRCUMSTANCES TO CONSIDER
Hey, hey!
I bet it's an affair!

sshh sshh...
knock knock
sshh sshh...
Can I love him?
And what about me?
But does he really? With all his heart?
He says he loves me...

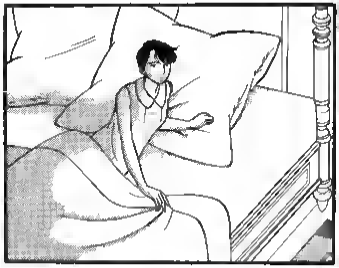
the one I
cant forget
even after all
this time...
After all,
the one
I love—


sshh sshh...
badump

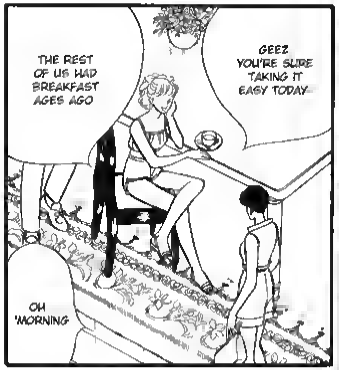

Auntie
Kayako
...?



sshh sshh



A dream ..?


THE REST OF US HAD BREAKFAST AGES AGO
GEEZ YOU'RE SURE TAKING IT EASY TODAY
OH 'MORNING

spla—sh

it wasn't just a dream
No.
badum
badum
badum
OH— GOOD MORNING
badum
GOOD MORNING
I didn't dream it
SAN
HUH...? WHAT?
THERE ARE SOME NICE SIGHTS TO SEE
LET'S DO IT.
KAORU-SAN?
WHAT WERE YOU THINKING ABOUT?
I'VE BEEN TRYING TO SUGGEST THAT WE GO FOR A DRIVE

WHAT IS IT?
OH
SHE LEFT AFTER BREAKFAST
UM, WHERE'S SAEGUSA-SAN?
TAKE CARE
WE'RE OFF!
ARE YOU AT AN IMPASSE?
MM-HMM
YOUR TEA, DEAR.

MM-HMM.
Come to Tokyo.
Let's live together, Kayako-san.
You're all I need. I'd cast everything else aside for you.
Kyouko-san...!

KOHARU-SAN? I'M GOING OUT PLEASE ARRANGE A CAR FOR ME
Yes, Ma'am
shiro

PLEASE HURRY
WHAT TIME SHALL WE EXPECT YOUR RETURN, MA'AM?
PLEASE TAKE ME TO THE STATION.
YES, MA'AM.
WOOM...
MA'AM?
YOU'VE BEEN A MILLION MILES AWAY TODAY
HUH?
WHAT'S WRONG?

OH, HELLO SIR
WHERE'S KAYAKO ?
THE MISSUS IS OUT, SIR.
KAYAKO ?
sigh
k-chk
OUT... WHERE?
SHE DIDN'T SAY
YOU DON'T KNOW EITHER, SIR?

SIR!
WE'D LIKE TO EAT R—
WE'RE HOOOME!
AND WE'RE HUNGRY, KOHARU-SAAN!
BOY, THAT SURE WAS FUN!
WASN'T IT?
SHE ISN'T THERE?!
YOU'RE TELLING ME THE TRUTH? YOU'RE NOT HIDING HER THERE?
YOU DID OPPOSE OUR MARRIAGE
BECAUSE OF THE AGE DIFFERENCE AND BECAUSE I HAD A CHILD
SHE REALLY ISN'T THERE?
—THE MISSUS HAS LEFT HOME!
LEFT HOME?!

I NEVER DREAMED SHE'D BE PLANNING SOMETHING LIKE THAT.
WHEN SHE WENT OUT, SHE ONLY HAD A HANDBAG WITH HER.
chuk
THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE HAS BEEN MAKING PHONE CALLS ALL OVER SINCE HE FOUND THE LETTER.
DAD
SHOW ME THE LETTER.
HOW WOULD I KNOW THAT, DAD?
YASUIYUKI
DO YOU KNOW ANYWHERE KAYAKO MIGHT HAVE GONE?
ANY ACQUAIN-TANCES OF HERS OR...

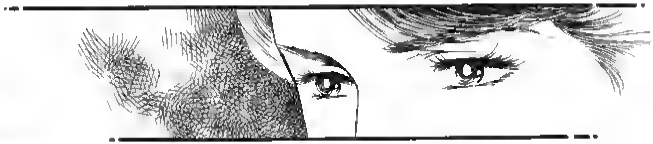
I offer you my deepest apologies for my selfish conduct.
However, this was the only course of action I could take.
Please, don't look for me.
Please consider me dead, and forget about me.
I- I DON'T UNDERSTAND IT. SHE SEEMED FINE UP UNTIL THIS MORNING. WHY WOULD SHE...
SHE LEFT DIVORCE PAPERS WITH IT ALREADY SIGNED AND STAMPED WITH HER PERSONAL SEAL.
DID KAYAKO-SAN HAVE A LOVER?
WELL, THIS S SURE TURNED INTO A BIG MESS

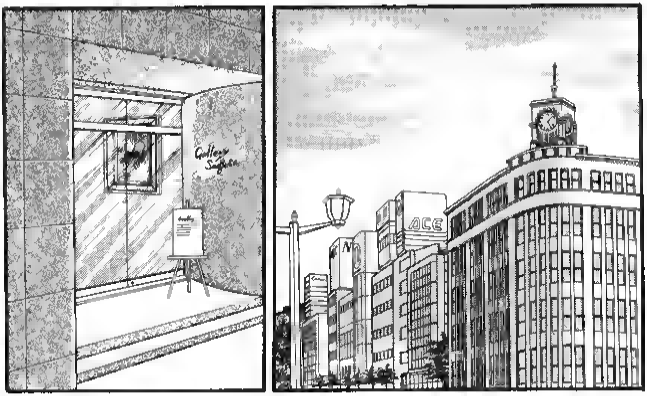
IT HAD TO BE ANOTHER GUY RIGHT?
SHE WAS YOUNG AND BEAUTIFUL...
YEAH THIS DOESN'T FEEL LIKE A VACATION ANYMORE
HOW 'BOUT WE GO HOME TOMOR-ROW?
SHE DIDN'T TAKE ANY OF HER THINGS WITH HER, OR ANY CASH IT'D MAKE MORE SENSE FOR IT TO BE A LOVER THAN A FRIEND
SHE MUST BE STAYING WITH SOMEONE...
A MAN?
CAN YOU THINK OF ANYONE?
I MADE HER A WOMAN AND...
DAD!
AN AFFAIR...? I DON'T BELIEVE IT
I'M THE ONLY ONE SHE'S EVER BEEN WITH

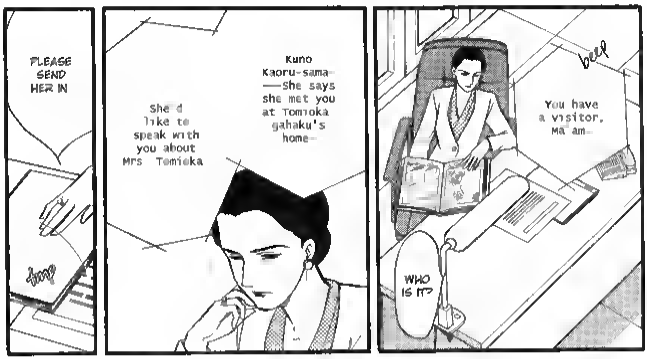
THAT JUST GOES TO SHOW THAT YOU DON'T REALLY NOTICE HER AT ALL!
YOU DIDN'T EVEN REALIZE SHE WAS THINKING ABOUT LEAVING!
AND YOU KICKED ME AND MOM OUT TO DO IT!
YOU FORCED KAYAKO-SAN TO MARRY YOU!
DO YOU EVEN REALLY LOVE KAYAKO-SAN?
HAVE YOU EVER STOPPED TO CONSIDER HER FEELINGS?
YASUYUKI!
Slam!
I love her....!
...But I do love Kayako.
DAD'S
HE DESERVED TO GET AN EARFUL!

I know who Kayako-sans lover is.
Kayako-san must've gone to that woman.
But nobody else knows that it would never even occur to them
that Kayako-sans lover could be a woman —!
HE'S ALL, "LOOK AT ME, I'M AN ARTIST" ALL HE THINKS ABOUT ARE HIS PAINTINGS!
ALWAYS SO SELFISH HE ONLY EVER THINKS OF HIMSELF!
DO YOU THINK IT'D BE FOR THE BEST IF KAYAKO-SAN DIDN'T GET BACK TOGETHER WITH HIM, THEN?
I CAN UNDERSTAND WHY SHE LEFT WITHOUT TELLING HIM
BUT
SHE WANTS A DIVORCE SO SHE CAN BE WITH SOME OTHER MAN, AND THERE'S NO WAY MY DAD WOULD JUST GIVE HER ONE

Sorry things ended up like that, after you came all that way to visit them with me...
Right
SO YOU HAVE NO IDEA WHERE KAYAKO-SAN COULD BE?
DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT
He can't paint, of course... and he's barely eating either. It's awful.
But Dad doesn't know what to do with himself.
We've hired a private detective...
I SEE




Gallery Sakura
ACE


PLEASE SEND HER IN
jump
Kuno Kaoru-sama— ——She says she met you at Tomioka gahaku's home—
She'd like to speak with you about Mrs. Tomioka
You have a visitor, Ma'am—
WHO IS IT?

YOU...
SAW US THAT NIGHT?
WHAT DO YOU WANT?
I JUST CAME BECAUSE I WANTED TO SPEAK WITH YOU
YES.
YOU SEE, I...
I'M DEEPLY IN LOVE WITH A WOMAN, TOO

◆ End of Part A ◆

What does it mean for one person to love another?
Who decided that it was normal for men and women to love each other but abnormal for a woman to love another woman or a man to love another man?
If a flower only blooms by night in the light of the moon, that doesn't make it any less beautiful...

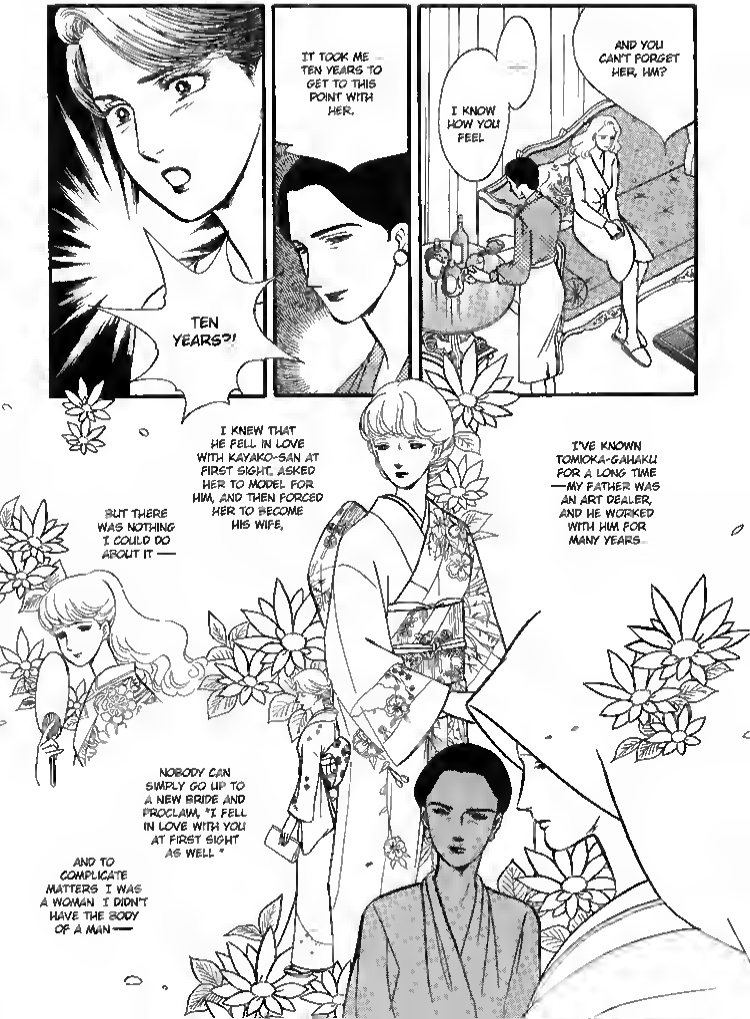
Midnight Flowers

Part B

knock
COME ON IN
WELCOME HOME
I'M BACK

THIS IS KUNO-SAN SHE'S A FRIEND OF YASUYUKI-SAN'S YOU REMEMBER HER, DON'T YOU?
OH, DEAR! WE HAVE A GUEST
IT'S STRANGE MY LIFE THERE SEEMS LIKE A DISTANT MEMORY NOW.
IT HASN'T EVEN BEEN A MONTH SINCE I CAME TO LIVE HERE WITH HER.
EVEN THOUGH
WE MET AT MY HUSBAND'S HOUSE, DIDN'T WE?
ARE YOU HAPPY TOGETHER EVEN SO?
SOCIETY WILL NEVER ACCEPT YOUR RELATION-SHIP
YES

IN OUR SENIOR YEAR OF HIGH SCHOOL,
WHILE WE WERE PRACTICING ROMEO AND JULIET FOR THE CULTURAL FESTIVAL,
THE GIRL I LOVE
WAS A CLASSMATE OF MINE
AND SHE RAN AWAY FROM ME
I KISSED HER JUST ONCE
WHEN I GOT TO COLLEGE
I WANTED TO KNOW WHAT "MEN" AND "SEX WITH MEN" WERE LIKE. SINCE THOSE WERE WHAT SHE CHOSE
I TRIED DATING COUNTLESS MEN,
BUT— IT JUST DIDN'T WORK FOR ME

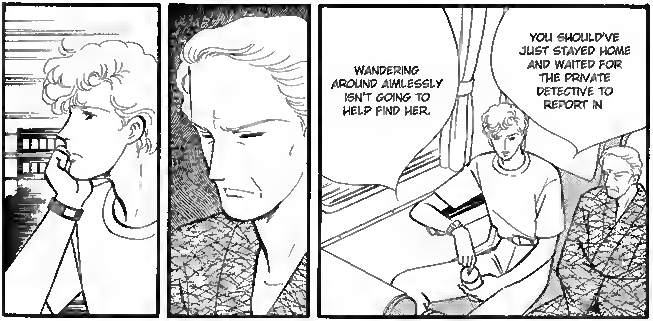

TEN YEARS?!
IT TOOK ME TEN YEARS TO GET TO THIS POINT WITH HER.
I KNOW HOW YOU FEEL
AND YOU CAN'T FORGET HER, HM?
I KNEW THAT HE FELL IN LOVE WITH KAYAKO-SAN AT FIRST SIGHT, ASKED HER TO MODEL FOR HIM, AND THEN FORCED HER TO BECOME HIS WIFE.
I'VE KNOWN TOMIOKA-GAHAKU FOR A LONG TIME —MY FATHER WAS AN ART DEALER, AND HE WORKED WITH HIM FOR MANY YEARS.
BUT THERE WAS NOTHING I COULD DO ABOUT IT —
NOBODY CAN SIMPLY GO UP TO A NEW BRIDE AND PROCLAIM, "I FELL IN LOVE WITH YOU AT FIRST SIGHT AS WELL."
AND TO COMPLICATE MATTERS I WAS A WOMAN. I DIDN'T HAVE THE BODY OF A MAN —

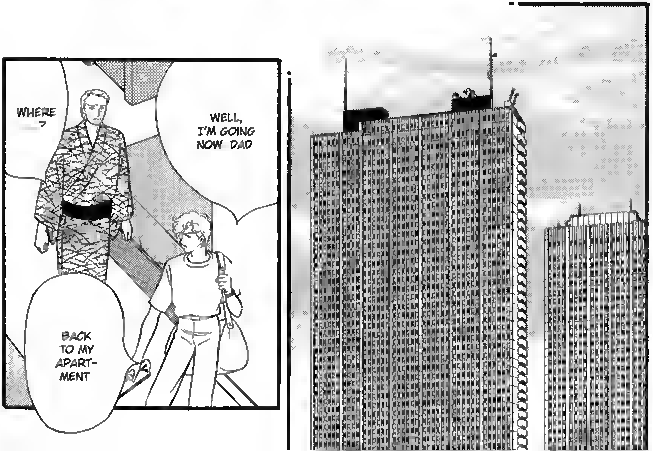
IN THE PRIVACY OF MY HEART YEAR AFTER YEAR.
I LOVED HER
SO WHAT DID YOU DO?
AND SHE REALIZED HOW I FELT ABOUT HER.
Jiyugaoka Chambord
The way they're spontaneously affectionate with each other makes it seem like they've been together for years....
R R R
I'm jealous.
KUNO SPEAKING

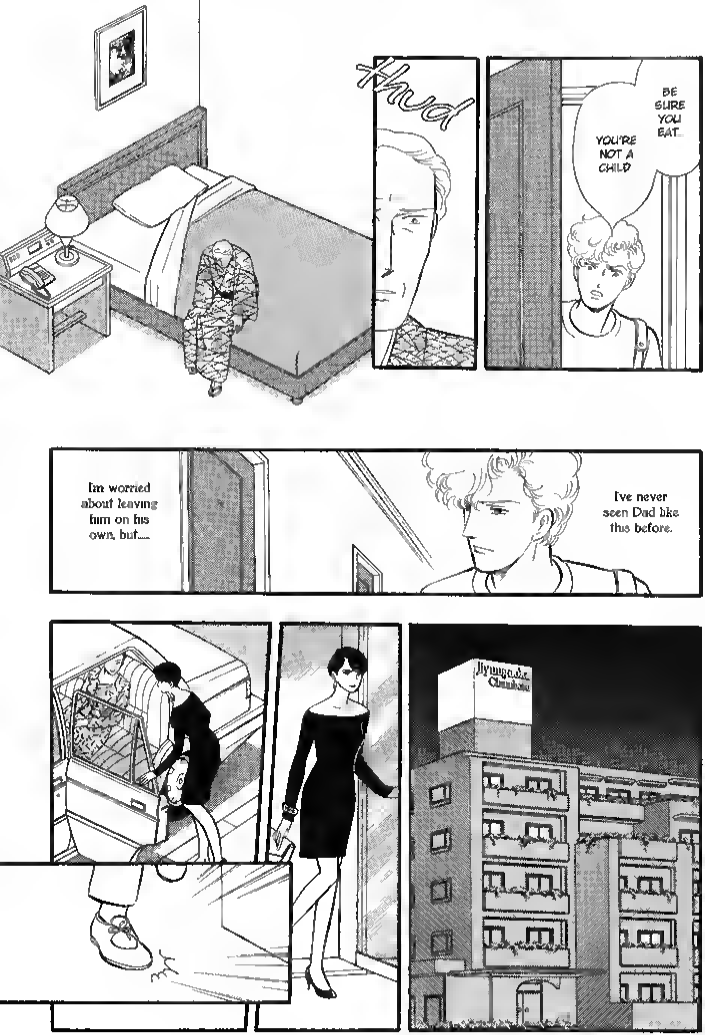
NO NOTHING IN PARTICULAR, BUT...
OH— DID YOU NEED SOMETHING NAKAYAMA-KUN?
It's me
I'M.
BUT IT'S GOOD YOU CALLED I'LL BE BLUNT
FLATTERED BY YOUR FEELINGS, BUT I JUST CAN'T RETURN THEM.
I DID GET THAT VIBE FROM YOU
YOU'RE IN LOVE WITH ANOTHER GUY AREN'T YOU?
You're welcome to believe that
I'm sorry.
click
OH! W-
No way....

crash
I can't give up on her based on just this one phone call...!
slam
DAD!
I'M GOING BACK TO TOKYO TOMORROW!
OH ?
IT'S TIME YOU GOT YOUR-SELF TOGE-THER.
CLASSES HAVE ALREADY STARTED AND I CAN'T STAY HERE WITH YOU FOREVER.
TOKYO
I'LL GO TO TOKYO WITH YOU
HUH?!
HER PARENTS LIVE IN TOKYO
SHE MUST HAVE A LOT OF ACQUAIN-TANCES THERE TOO
YES, I'M SURE OF IT

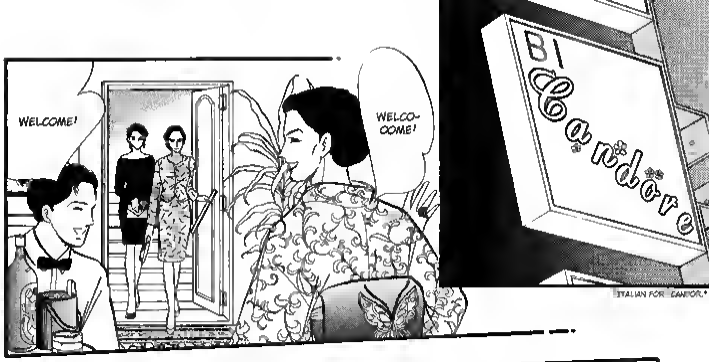
Cwee


YOU SHOULD'VE JUST STAYED HOME AND WAITED FOR THE PRIVATE DETECTIVE TO REPORT IN
WANDERING AROUND AIMLESSLY ISN'T GOING TO HELP FIND HER.


WELL, I'M GOING NOW DAD
WHERE ?
BACK TO MY APART-MENT

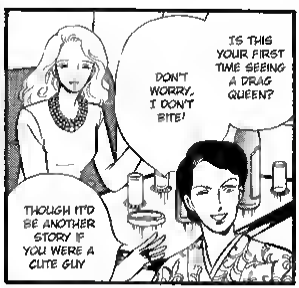

Hmm
BE SURE YOU EAT.
YOU'RE NOT A CHILD
I'm worried about leaving him on his own, but.....
I've never seen Dad like this before.

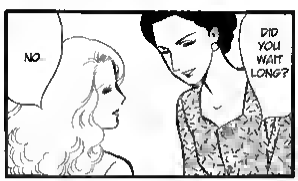
Huh..?
Why are Kaoru-san and Suegusa-san...
redall
Coffee Shop
Alley
Doll Shop
Hollyhock
CAFE
F- FOLLOW THAT WHITE CAR, PLEASE!
HUH?
WHAT, SIR?


WELCOME!
WELCO-OOME!
BI Cantare
*ITALIAN FOR "CANTOR."

MAMA, THIS IS KUNO KAORU-SAN
OH, AND YOU'RE NEW HERE AREN'T YOU?
YOUR SWEETIE IS WAITING FOR YOU

SAEGUSA-SAN, THIS PLACE IS——
THIS PLACE IS FOR GAYS AND LESBIANS.
HEHE SURPRI-SED?

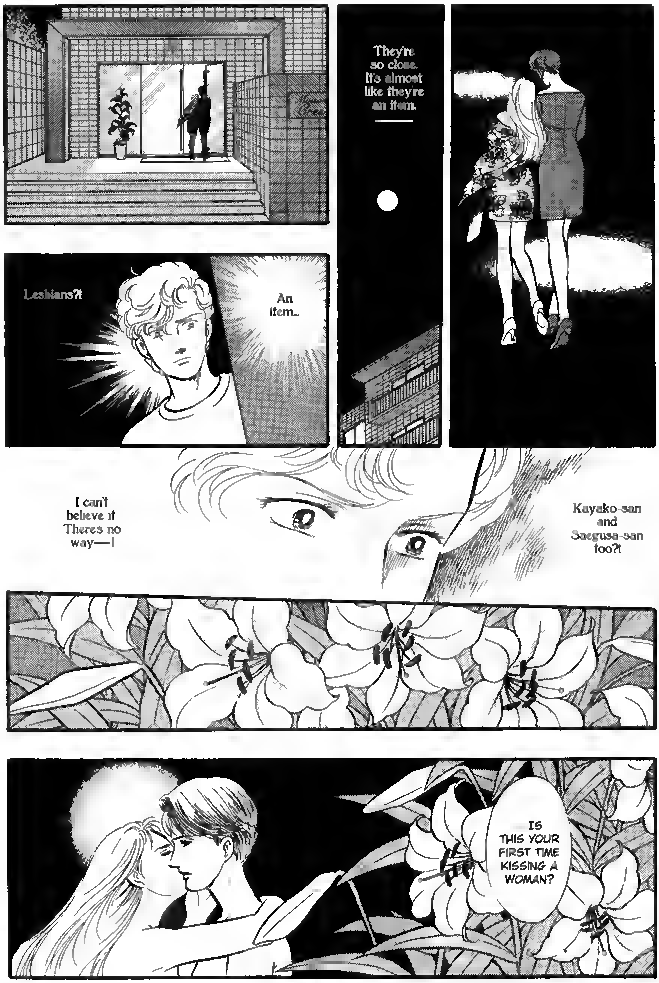

IS THIS YOUR FIRST TIME SEEING A DRAG QUEEN?
DON'T WORRY, I DON'T BITE!
THOUGH IT'D BE ANOTHER STORY IF YOU WERE A CUTE GUY


NO.
DID YOU WAIT LONG?

AND REGULAR PEOPLE WHO DON'T LOOK FUNNY AT GAY PEOPLE
click...
bump
IT'S BEEN A WHILE, KYOUKO-SAN
MAY I JOIN YOU?
OH, MARIE!
YOU CERTAINLY HAVE A SHARP EYE
WELL, THIS NEW GIRL ISN'T YOUR GIRL-FRIEND RIGHT?
SO—

GO AHEAD
YAY!
SHE HAS THE RIGHT TO DECIDE TOO
WHAT DO YOU SAY, KAORU-SAN?
YOU KNOW KAORU-SAN,
YOU DON'T HAVE TO HIDE WHO YOU ARE HERE
Opera
THAT YOU'RE A WOMAN WHO ONLY LOVES WOMEN
YOU CAN BE OPEN ABOUT THE FACT
All the people going in and out seem kind of off...
What is that piece.....?

NO NO!
YOU CAN'T GO HOME, KAORU-CHAN
YOU'RE COMING HOME WITH ME!
Bell
Huh?!
SEE YOU, MAMA
THANK YOOOU!
SEE YOU LATER, KAORU-SAN
GOOD NIGHT
Kayako-san and Saegusa-san——!
Kaoru-san and—— whoo that woman?
MY APARTMENT'S RIGHT NEARBY


They're so close. It's almost like they're an item.
Lesbians?!
An item..
I can't believe it. There's no way—!
Kayako-san and Saegusa-san too?!
IS THIS YOUR FIRST TIME KISSING A WOMAN?

COPY WHAT I'M DOING TO YOU, OKAY?
I'LL SHOW YOU WHAT TO DO... THEN
BUT I'VE NEVER DONE THIS SORT OF THING WITH A WOMAN BEFORE
...NO...
WHAT FEELS GOOD TO YOU FEELS GOOD TO ME TOO
Because we're both women....

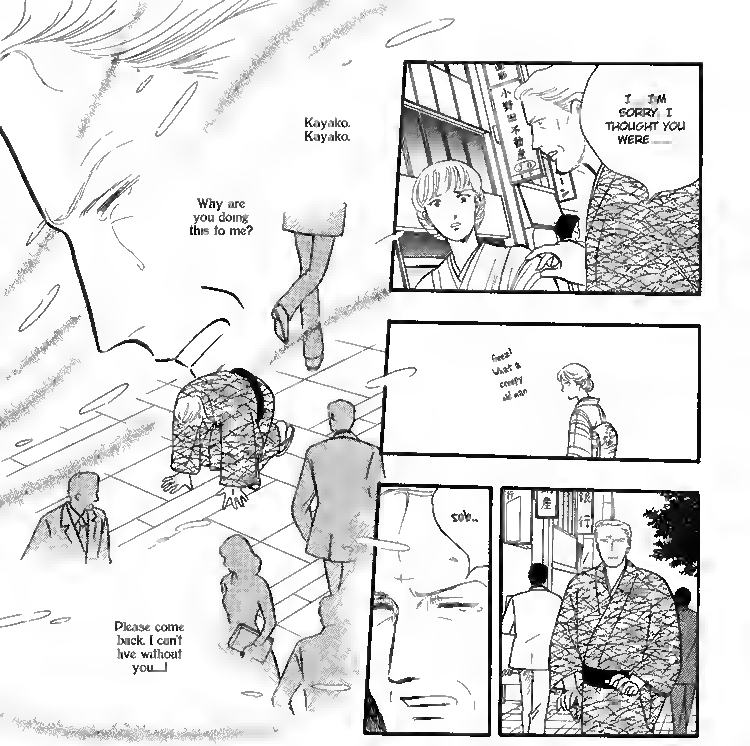
BUT THE "NORMAL" THING IS FOR WOMEN TO LOVE MEN, RIGHT?
AND MEN TO LOVE WOMEN
WHY SHOULD I HAVE TO BE "NORMAL"?
WHAT DOES IT MATTER IF I'M DIFFERENT FROM OTHER PEOPLE?
THEY'RE THEM, AND I'M ME
IF I'M NOT BOTHERING ANYONE ELSE, WHY SHOULD IT MATTER HOW I LIVE MY LIFE?
WHY DO I LIKE WOMEN? .....HEHE.
YOU SURE ASK WEIRD QUESTIONS.
YOU'RE RIGHT
I WAS BORN TO "NORMAL" PARENTS, AND RAISED PRETTY NORMALLY
I DON'T KNOW WHY I ENDED UP LIKE THIS

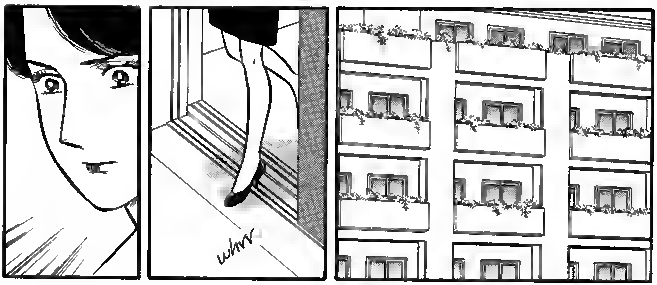
No. I was like this even before that happened.
I've liked girls better ever since I was little....
MY FATHER
WHAT ABOUT YOU, MY DARLING?
I HATED MY FATHER
BUT... YES, I DON'T KNOW WHY I'M LIKE THIS
I WONDER WHY IT IS.
LEAVE THE PSYCHO-ANALYSIS TO THE PROFESS-IONALS
AND ANYWAY, THERE'S NO RHYME OR REASON TO LOVE.
WHETHER IT'S A MAN AND A WOMAN, OR A WOMAN AND A WOMAN... RIGHT?
My Princess Saho....

A hangover—
I drank way too much last night
URGG-HH—
Throb
Throb
Throb
OUCH
UNGH
...If only everything I saw last night was just a dream—
But I have no proof they're lesbians—
What do I do—? Should I tell dad?
She's not back yet
R
R
R
R
R

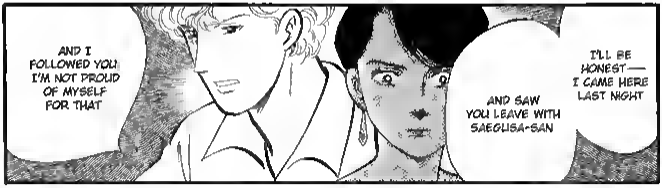
One moment, please
TOMIOKA, IN ROOM 1025, PLEASE.
beep bop
She's still with that woman...
boop boop boop
It seems he's out at the moment. ...
Shall I try again?
OH NO THAT'S FINE
Dad...
Where are you?

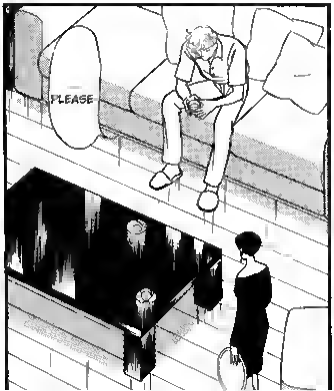
What a huge crowd of people.
People, people, people...
But I need to do *something*
I do know that just wandering around aimlessly like this won't help me find Kayako.
KAYAKO!
KAYAKO
It's not her —
EEEK!
KA—


Kayako.
Kayako.
Why are you doing this to me?
I... I'M SORRY I THOUGHT YOU WERE...
Great! What a creepy old man
sob...
Please come back. I can't live without you...


WHY?

I THOUGHT I TOLD YOU GOODBYE
WHAT YOU SAID WASN'T ENOUGH TO MAKE ME GIVE UP ON YOU
WEL-COME HOME
YOU SURE TOOK YOUR SWEET TIME


AND I FOLLOWED YOU. I'M NOT PROUD OF MYSELF FOR THAT
AND SAW YOU LEAVE WITH SAEGUSA-SAN
I'LL BE HONEST— I CAME HERE LAST NIGHT

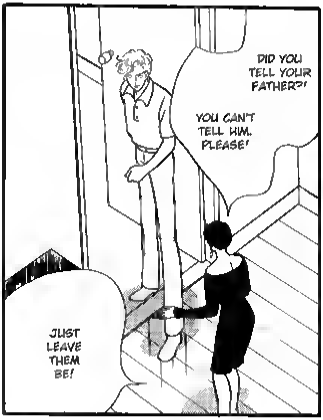

PLEASE

WHY ARE WE TALKING OUT HERE?
WOULD YOU LET ME COME IN?
BE MY GUEST

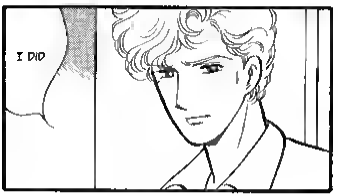
I CAN'T LOVE A MAN.
TELL ME... THAT WOMAN WAS JUST A FRIEND.
TELL ME I MISUNDERSTOOD WHAT I SAW LAST NIGHT
I SHOULDN'T HAVE LED YOU TO EXPECT ANYTHING FROM ME.
— I'M SORRY, NAKAYAMA-SAN
NAKA-YAMA-SAN...
I — LOVE YOU
I —
RESPECTABLE GIRLS NOT LIKE ME —
THERE ARE ANY NUMBER OF GIRLS OUT THERE WHO WOULD BE PERFECT FOR YOU.
YOU'RE A GOOD PERSON.

I COULD'VE COPED WITH IT IF IT'D BEEN ANOTHER GUY. BUT I CAN'T STAND HAVING A WOMAN STEAL YOU FROM ME!
Hwd!
...NO!
NAKA-YAMA-SAN, STOP!
I SAID STOP!
YOU DON'T KNOW HOW GOOD IT IS TO BE WITH A REAL MAN THAT'S WHY
YOU'RE JUST CONTINUING THE "ONEE-SAMA PLAY" FROM THE ALL-GIRL SCHOOL YOU WENT TO RIGHT?
UNNG-GHH'
pant pant
pant pant
smack!

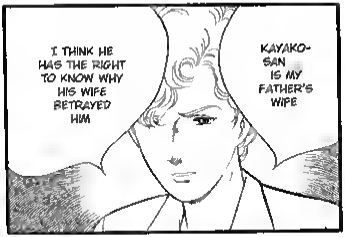
JUST GO!
SORRY
I'M NOT INTO SEX!
I'M A LESBIAN THAT'S ALL
RAPING A WOMAN IS HARDLY GOING TO SHOW HER HOW GOOD IT IS TO BE WITH A MAN!

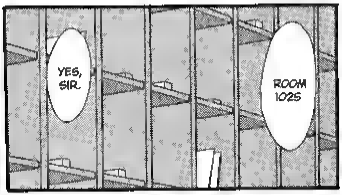

DID YOU TELL YOUR FATHER?!
YOU CAN'T TELL HIM. PLEASE!
JUST LEAVE THEM BE!

WAIT
YOU SAID LAST NIGHT
YOU SAW THEM TOO THEN—?

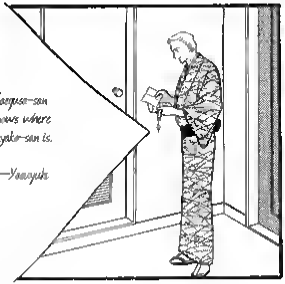

I DID

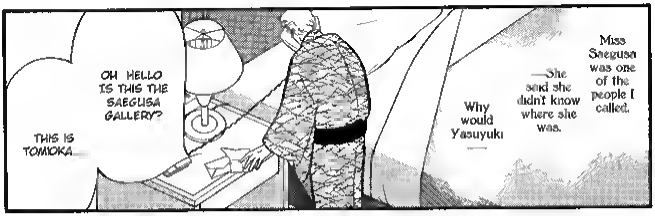
TOMIOKA-SAMA— CORRECT?
YOU HAVE A MESSAGE
THANKS


KAYAKO-SAN IS MY FATHER'S WIFE
I THINK HE HAS THE RIGHT TO KNOW WHY HIS WIFE BETRAYED HIM


ROOM 1025
YES, SIR.

Huh...?


Saegusa-san knows where Kayako-san is.
—Yasuyuki


OH HELLO IS THIS THE SAEGUSA GALLERY?
THIS IS TOMIOKA...
Why would Yasuyuki—
—She said she didn't know where she was.
Miss Saegusa was one of the people I called.

APART-MENT 612 ——
GOT IT. THANK YOU VERY MUCH.
HM? HER HOME ADDRESS ——?
OH, MY! TOMIOKA-GAHAKU!
Gallery Sawaki
MY HUMBLEST APOLOGIES. THE HEAD OF THE GALLERY HAS ALREADY LEFT FOR THE DAY ……
YOU LEFT A MESSAGE FOR HIM AT THE DESK ?
YOUR FATHER IS HERE IN TOKYO?!
I won't let anybody—
take Kayako away from me.

I SEE
THANKS
IT'S ALL RIGHT. WE'LL BE CAREFUL YES
THAT SHE WOULD DO THAT TO MY DAD——
KAYAKO-SAN IS ILL!
THEY LIVED TOGETHER AS HUSBAND AND WIFE FOR TEN YEARS
I THOUGHT IT WAS JUST TOO MUCH
SHE'S BEEN GETTING WORSE ALL THIS TIME!
THAT'S WHY SHE LEFT!
THAT'S WHY SHE CAN'T HAVE KIDS
I KNOW SHE HAS A WEAK HEART, RIGHT?
OH
NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS, I'LL PROTECT YOU
KYOUKO-SAN

Yes?
IT'S TOMI-OKA.
ding dooong
...I'M WORRIED
ding dooong
gulp
DON'T COME OUT OF THE BEDROOM
IT'S YOUR HUS-BAND.
YOU HIDE
PLEASE COME IN, GAHAKU.
Ahuda...

smack
PLEASE!
I BEG OF YOU
TOMIOKA-SAN.
PLEASE TELL ME WHERE KAYAKO IS——!
KAYAKO-SAN MAY BE YOUR WIFE BUT SHE ISN'T YOUR "POSSESSION."
SHE LEFT OF HER OWN FREE WILL. WHY WOULD YOU BRING HER BACK HOME?
I KNEW IT——
YOU KNOW WHERE SHE IS, BUT YOU'RE HIDING IT FROM ME.
I—IF YOU HIDE KAYAKO FROM ME I'LL NEVER SELL YOU ANOTHER PAINTING!
——THAT CAN'T BE HELPED.

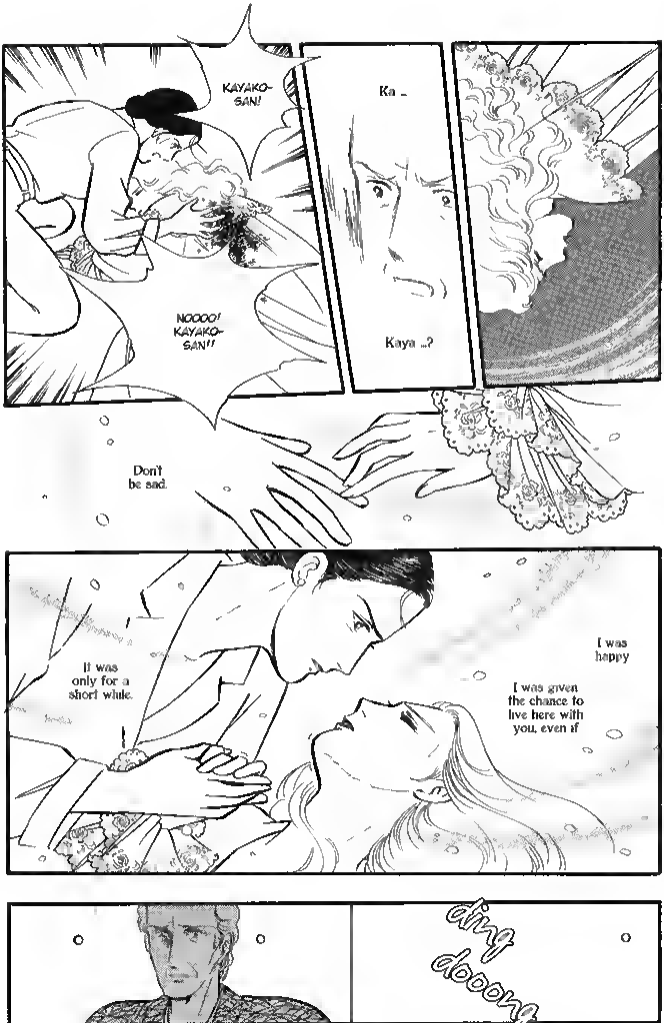
PLEASE STOP
IF YOU DON'T—
WAVING THAT THING AROUND—
I'M SERIOUS!
TOMIOKA-SAN——!
——TELL ME WHERE SHE IS.
slam
STOP, DEAR!
KAYAKO-SAN!
KAYAKO!

SO YOU WERE HIDING OUT HERE...
What..?
NO NO
I TOLD YOU NOT TO COME OUT
What are they...
YOU'RE COMING HOME WITH ME, KAYAKO
I'M NOT GIVING YOU A DIVORCE
COME ON!
PLEASE FORGIVE ME DEAR.
I'LL TELL YOU THE TRUTH
WE'RE IN LOVE

I loved you.
I cast my wife and child aside out of love for you...
...What?
...ALL YOU DID WAS TAKE
I made you my wife because I love you.
Are you saying you never loved me?
YOU JUST MADE ME ONE OF YOUR POSSESSIONS
BUT WHEN I MET HER...
I REALIZED FOR THE FIRST TIME
THAT TRUE LOVE GOES BOTH WAYS— IT'S SOMETHING THAT YOU BOTH GIVE AND RECEIVE

Two women
——?!
I have a bad feeling about this...
HURRY!
FASTER.
THAT'S UNREASONABLE MA'AM
Then...
IF YOU DO, I'LL LET EVERYTHING ELSE GO——
KAYAKO-SAN IS TELLING YOU SHE WON'T GO!
——YOU HAVE ONE LAST CHANCE——
COME HOME WITH ME

I'll take you back by force if I have to!
Thud!
Ahhhh!


KAYAKO-SAN!
Ka ..
NOOOO! KAYAKO-SAN!!
Kaya ...?
Don't be sad.
It was only for a short while.
I was given the chance to live here with you, even if
I was happy
ding dooong

IT'S OPEN!
k-chk
ding dong ding dong
NO ONE'S ANSWERING
COULD THEY BE OUT?
KILL ME...
KILL ME TOO...!!

Her ailing heart couldn't hold out

She was in Saegusa-sans embrace when it happened just as she had wished. ——

I know that I will not live much longer so I've decided to leave home.

When I die, I want to be with the person I love most dearly—the one who holds me most dear

The wound that Tomioka-gahaku inflicted wasn't that deep.

WEEEEEEE

WEEEEEEE

but Kayako-san breathed her last in the ambulance on the way to the hospital.

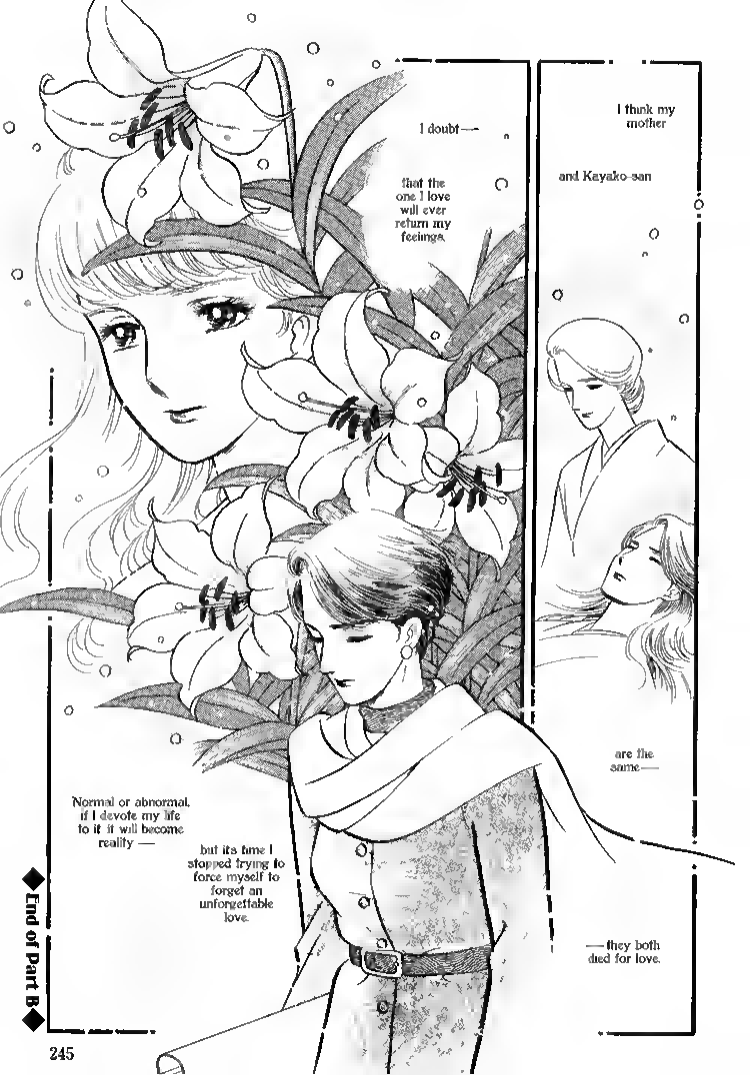
College Square
LONG TIME NO SEE
OH !

YOU DIDN'T HAVE SOME BUSINESS WITH SAEGUSA-SAN?
NO NOT REALLY
I JUST KIND OF WANTED TO STOP BY YOU?
SAME HERE
WHENEVER I'M IN THE GINZA DISTRICT I CAN'T HELP GOING THERE
——JUST TO LOOK AT KAYAKO-SAN'S PICTURE
HOW IS YOUR FATHER?
MM—— LUCKILY HE WAS GIVEN A SUSPENDED SENTENCE SO HE ESCAPED A PRISON SENTENCE——
BUT IT'S LIKE HIS SOUL WAS SUCKED OUT AFTER THE INCIDENT

I THINK MY FATHER REALLY DID LOVE KAYAKO-SAN
He shuts himself up in his studio all day
IN HIS OWN WAY
and paints Kayako-san.
He paints the same picture over and over——
Kayako-san with a smile that's just for him.——
YOU'RE RIGHT.
SORRY
NOT ALL WOUNDS ARE VISIBLE ON THE OUTSIDE
WELL THE PUBLIC DIDN'T FIND OUT SHE WAS A LESBIAN, SO
THE SAEGUSA GALLERY STILL SEEMS TO BE THRIVING.

ARE YOU STILL WITH THAT PERSON ?
OH KAORU-SAN
SEE YOU
NO.
I know
that Saegusa san loves Kayako san.
That she's loved her all this time, and that she'll never stop—

First printed in the January 1991 i ue of *Love You*


I doubt—
that the one I love will ever return my feelings.
I think my mother
and Kayako-san
are the same—
—they both died for love.
but it's time I stopped trying to force myself to forget an unforgettable love.
Normal or abnormal, if I devote my life to it it will become reality —
◆End of Part B◆

Moonlight Flowers

Chapter 1

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Lililicious~may its fragrance encompass you
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